

2016

# THE MIND'S EYE

A Liberal Arts Journal

Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts



### **Editorial Board**

Melanie Mowinski, *Managing Editor*

David Zachary Finch

Sumi Colligan

Ely Janis

Pamela L. Contakos

Gerol Petruzella

Leon Peters

Jennifer L. Zoltanski

Seth Brown, *Copy Editor*

D. Gilson, *Online Editor*

### **Advisory Board**

Stephen Fix, *Professor of English, Williams College*

Tony Gengarelli, *Professor of Art History, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*

Thomas Green, *Professor of Law and History, University of Michigan*

Mary Huber, *Carnegie Foundation Scholar*

William Montgomery, *Professor Emeritus, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*

Lea Newman, *Professor of English Emerita, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts*

Joseph Thompson, *Director of MASS MoCA*

© 2016 *The Mind's Eye*

ISSN 1098-0512

[http://www.mcla.mass.edu/Publications/  
Faculty\\_Publications/The\\_Minds\\_Eye\\_spr](http://www.mcla.mass.edu/Publications/Faculty_Publications/The_Minds_Eye_spr)

*The Mind's Eye*, a journal of scholarly and creative work, is published annually by Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. While emphasizing articles of scholarly merit, *The Mind's Eye* focuses on a general communication of ideas of interest to a liberal arts college. We welcome expository essays, including reviews, as well as fiction, poetry, and art. Please refer to the inside back cover for a list of writer's guidelines.

If you would like to receive future copies of *The Mind's Eye*, please contact: *The Mind's Eye*, c/o Melanie Mowinski, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, 375 Church Street, North Adams, MA 01247, and ask to be added to our mailing list.

# CONTENTS

From the Editor.....	4
On Trees and Liberal Education <b>Karen M. Cardozo</b> .....	6
The Metamorphoses of Ovid's Women and Trees <b>Nancy Ciccone</b> .....	26
<i>The Mother Tree</i> Poetry <b>Irene Willis</b> .....	31
<i>Passing</i> and <i>The Brush Pickers</i> Poetry <b>Megan Snyder-Camp</b> .....	32
From <i>Stories from "America"</i> <b>Wayne Salazar</b> .....	36
"You Won't Have Our Park": Gezi Park Protests as Ritual in Istanbul, Turkey <b>Sumi Colligan</b> .....	43
<i>Protest</i> and <i>Cord/Cairns</i> Poetry <b>David Giannini</b> .....	65
Post Hoc <b>Gerol Petruzella</b> .....	75
The Language of Trees <b>Holly Wren Spaulding</b> .....	72
<i>Maple</i> Poetry <b>Cynthia Read Gardner</b> .....	80
ABOUT THE AUTHORS.....	81

Cover Photo: Melanie Mowinski, *Here, Stands paper word installation*,  
Nebraska City, NE, April 2016

## From the Editor

What is tree culture? How do trees contribute to the role of place-making in a community? What are the ways that trees gain stature culturally? Do trees deserve to stand in the world, regardless of humankind's needs for land and property? How have trees been used as forms of resistance? How do these questions connect with the theory of nature-society relations and environmental discourse? These questions accompanied the call for contributions to this theme issue about trees. Trees surround our life at MCLA and in the Berkshires, yet the contents of this issue address ideas and questions related to trees that expand way beyond the branches of our local ecology.

Each writer/poet/author/artist addresses the key element behind the inspiration for this issue: that every tree, like every human being, has value. Karen Cardozo opens the issue and addresses this head-on in her rhizomatic essay as she explores the value of a liberal arts education through the keyword *tree*. From this beginning, we traverse the forest of other writings, including poetry by Irene Willis, Megan Snyder Camp, David Giannini, and Cynthia Gardner that ask us to consider loss and the everyday wilderness of modern life. Each of these different voices considers the heart of a tree and the heart of a human, finding the veins that connect them both to their meaning, being and beauty.

Gerol Petruzella plays with words to create a trail through a different kind of forest, leading the reader through the mental wanderings of the creation process.

Nancy Ciccone uses Ovid's *Metamorphoses* of trees to examine the cultural parallels of the status of women during Ovid's era and our own. Like trees, some die or are brutally destroyed, others flourish. Her words remind us of the challenges that still exist for many people in our world today. Both Wayne Salazaar and Sumi Colligan dig into those struggles and other conflicts that surround trees both in the United States and abroad.

Holly Wren Spaulding's essay asks us to look at the trees, to find the grace that they hold, and to see that grace in everyone around us. She reminds us that trees and the forest are places of refuge, sacred spaces, just like each and every one of us, if we can just look.

It's fitting that this last print issue of *The Mind's Eye* is one that focuses on the many different ways trees branch into our lives. Let us celebrate how trees provide so much for us, including the paper that this print issue uses. We are transitioning to an online journal format in the hopes of engaging our audience in new and exciting ways. We will be sharing more about this through our website: <http://www.mcla.edu/Academics/academicaffairs/mindseye/> Stay tuned.

Melanie Mowinski

*Managing Editor*

# On Trees and Liberal Education

BY KAREN M. CARDOZO

Some have witnessed remarkable events. Others have provided inspiration. Still others are venerated for their spiritual value. Each and every one has a special story to tell (Newman).

[T]hose with a broader intellectual background are often best able to frame questions, and contribute at high levels in our organizations, which face ever-changing landscapes and challenges. We need to foster and protect academic environments in which a broad, integrated, yet still deep education can flourish. They are our national treasure (Silbersweig).

To what significant group of people, you may wonder, does my first epigraph refer? In fact, it comes from *National Geographic's* recent “tribute to the world’s 3.04 trillion trees,” featuring a photo gallery of “exceptional examples” from El Arbol del Tule outside Oaxaca, Mexico (whose massive trunk sports branches two tennis courts in length) to the sacred Bunut Bolong banyan tree in Bali, Indonesia (Newman). As journalist Catherine Newman has noted, although all trees have quantifiable value,<sup>1</sup> “these particular trees [are] priceless.” Indeed, we humans have a symbiotic, if imbalanced, relationship with trees, for as scientist Stefano Mancuso argues: “Plants could live very well without us, in general. But without them we would die out very quickly” (5). Yet too often in contemporary culture (most indigenous or traditional societies *did* venerate trees, as dramatized in the blockbuster film *Avatar*), trees and other plants are merely “the mute, immobile furniture of our world—useful enough, and generally attractive,



but obviously second-class citizens in the republic of life on Earth” (Pollan). As Michael Pollan elaborates,

it is only human arrogance, and the fact that the lives of plants unfold [in] a much slower dimension of time, that keeps us from appreciating their intelligence [and] consequent success in the game of life, which has been extraordinary, and dwarfs our own.... [As] soon as you define intelligence as, very simply, the ability to solve the problems that life presents, it becomes impossible to deny such a capability to plants” (xi-xii).

Valuing trees as they deserve requires the cultivation of a different human being, one with an expansive ecological consciousness. Ironically, the model most likely to achieve such ends—that of the liberal arts—is itself increasingly a second-class citizen in the republic of education. Just as trees are threatened by environmental destruction, so too are our educational habitats by the devaluation and underfunding of accessible, high-quality education under neoliberal global capitalism (Selingo). Accused by turns of being elitist, impractical, or out of touch with modern realities, liberal arts institutions in general and the humanities in particular are often under siege for their perceived irrelevance. Yet a “big picture” liberal education remains our best hope for developing an awareness of the “special story” of each and every being (whether human, flora or fauna) and understanding how those stories connect (Berrett). The Latin root of education is *educare* – to draw out or elicit from within. Inspired by the arboreal theme of this special issue of *Mind’s Eye*, I aim to explore the value of a liberal arts education by tapping the keyword *tree* –like a maple in sugaring season—for whatever insights may result.

The Welsh socialist Raymond Williams was perhaps best known for his treatise *Culture and Society* (1958), the foundational work from which he derived *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976, 1983). Via the latter’s interdisciplinary engagements—classified variously as “cultural history, historical semantics, history of ideas, social criticism, literary history and sociology” (13)—Williams unpacked the hidden complexities of significant words, which cast their historical tendrils into our present understandings. In *Keywords*, Williams reports that after he returned from army service during WWII to academic life at Cambridge University, he felt that he no longer spoke the same language. Struggling to grasp the new meanings of the word *culture* in particular, he noted that it was connected inextricably to other

words like “*class and art... industry and democracy*,” and that he felt “these five words as a kind of structure” (13). Indeed, any given word *is* a structure, housing meaning across time and space.

Observing that *culture* is “one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language,” Williams traced its many evolutions from “a noun of process: the tending *of* something, basically crops or animals” (87) to future eras when this tending of natural growth was extended metaphorically to “intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development” in human beings, then to a noun indicating a “particular way of life [of] a people, a period, a group, or humanity” as well as “the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity” (90). As we will see, trees have long been a part of “culture” in every sense, from the tending of trees (as in *tree culture*) to the way that trees figure prominently in conceptions of human development, genealogy, and intellectual and artistic practices.

According to Gina Cooke, “looking into the story of a word is like counting the rings of a tree”—the older the word, the more intriguing the story: “compared to languages like Greek or Chinese that date back thousands of years, English is just a sapling in the lexical forest. But the stories of its words often start long before English itself took root” (Cooke). Take the word *true*. It typically means factual or correct. But it can also mean upright or faithful, as in a “true friend.” Cooke observes that “trees have been metaphors for steadfastness and faithfulness for as long as the word *true* has defined the same qualities.” Thus, while there are many branches to the etymological tree of *true*, its roots of *trust*, *betroth* and *truce* all signify faithfulness. Going back to Middle English, the denotation of *treo* meant faith and trust, but it also meant *tree*. As Cooke explains, “Some of the earliest expressions of the concept of truth were associated with the uprightness of an oak, the steadiness of a silver birch, and the fidelity of an orchard bearing fruit year after year.” In short, trees *are* true.

Such lexical ties exist because trees are among the oldest living organisms on the planet, some still standing from when *treo* was in common use. For example, the Fortingall yew from Scotland is almost 2000 years old, the Californian bristlecone pine dates back 5000 years. And Utah’s “Pando,” a quaking Aspen grove, has a single root system that goes back 80 millenia (Cooke). As scientist Michael Grant explains of the latter wonder:

Unlike giant sequoias, each of which is a genetically separate individual, a group of thousands of aspens can actually be a single organism, sharing a root system and a unique set of genes. We therefore



nominated [an] aspen individual growing just south of the Wasatch Mountains of Utah as the most massive living organism in the world. We nicknamed it Pando, a Latin word meaning I spread. Made up of 47,000 tree trunks, each with an ordinary tree's usual complement of leaves and branches, Pando covers 106 acres and, conservatively, weighs in excess of 13 million pounds, making it [the largest and heaviest organism in the world].



*image in the public domain, Morton*

Pando is a rhizome—a subterranean horizontal stem from which many shoots arise at various intervals. It looks like “a grove of trees,” but is a single organism. Rhizomes inspired the central metaphor in, as well as the unusual structure of, the collaborative writings of philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Felix Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus* (the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*). As their translator Brian Massumi explains, Deleuze and Guattari sought to model an alternative to restrictive “State philosophy,” critiquing the “arborescent model of thought (the proudly erect tree under whose spreading boughs latter-day Platos conduct their class)” (xviii). In contrast, they argued, “any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be. This is very different from the tree or root, which

plots a point, fixes an order" (7). The "rhizome ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (7). At its best, I would argue, a liberal arts education represents *both* rhizomatic connection *and* tree-like "rooting" in a particular field of study. In so doing, it manifests the near universal "hoop and tree" metaphor of wholeness.

In *The Hoop and the Tree: A Compass for Finding a Deeper Relationship With All Life*, Chris Hoffman integrates ancient spiritual teachings and modern research literatures to reveal that the metaphorical image of the Hoop and the Tree appears "not only in Lakota mythology but also throughout the great wisdom traditions of the world—and indeed in modern psychology and systems science—as an image of the deep structure of wholeness and health, both in the universe and in the human psyche and soul" (6). As Hoffman elaborates, "All the great wisdom traditions teach the importance of aspiring toward some state [of] wisdom or enlightenment that is ultimately unutterable. All the traditions also teach about the importance of relationship. These two types of teachings meet in the image of the Hoop and the Tree" (7). Images of circles are familiar metaphors for relationship or wholeness, while the verticality of trees and analogues such as mountains, ladders, and pillars are metaphors for aspirational growth as well as descent: whether exploring one's ancestors or the depths of one's own psyche, "A tree can grow tall only if it has sturdy and far-reaching roots" (Hoffman 9).

Ultimately even Deleuze and Guattari proffer the same complementary structure: "The tree is filiation, but the rhizome is alliance, uniquely alliance. The tree imposes the verb 'to be,' but the fabric of the rhizome is the conjunction, 'and. . . and. . . and. . .'" (25). Likewise, liberal education provides breadth in its "hoop" of connection (across disciplines and community members), along with a rooted depth in a chosen areas of study that allows each individual to aspire to the highest "tree" of self-realization in a fruitful and meaningful existence.

Taking its cue from *A Thousand Plateaus*, this rhizomatic little essay is "an open system. It does not pretend to have the final word" (Massumi, x). At a time when the liberal arts are losing favor to more instrumental, technical, or vocational forms of education, I hope to model the enduring value of liberal learning by exploring one small keyword – *tree* – and watching a whole forest of ideas grow from it. For "just as trees mark our landscapes and witness our histories, the story of words landscape our language, capturing the rains and sunshine of generations, and sending roots and branches far and wide. As there is a whole orchard in a single seed, there is a whole story in a

single word” (Cooke). Exploring *tree* as a keyword has allowed me to discover much that I did not know prior to writing this essay, while renewing my own faith in the tree and hoop of liberal learning.

As Fareed Zakaria argues, “the central virtue of a liberal education is that it teaches you how to write, and writing makes you think” (72). Zakaria cites two other primary virtues of a liberal education: its cultivation of “articulate communication” and conversation (76) along with the skill of learning “how to learn” for a lifetime (78). The combination of my foundation in the liberal arts (B.A. in English from Haverford College), interdisciplinary PhD, and the power of search engines at my fingertips has allowed me to turn a brief thought experiment into a genuine *essay* in Theodor Adorno’s sense: writing that “suspends the traditional concept of method” and thinks “conjointly and in freedom about things that meet in its freely chosen object” (11). This is also an interdisciplinary engagement in Roland Barthes’s sense of generating a new “object that belongs to no-one.”<sup>2</sup> For what single person or discipline can rightly claim ownership of trees? This essay, therefore, represents “technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that [I hope, may yield a] result that makes our hearts sing” (Steve Jobs, quoted in Zakaria 82).

How do I love trees? Let me count the ways that they contribute to the circle of life and inspire my thinking about the value of liberal education:<sup>3</sup>

1. *Humans and trees have a symbiotic relationship.* during photosynthesis trees take in the carbon dioxide we exhale and release the oxygen we need. As Martha Beck notes, humans have not yet achieved the magical capacity of the “green nation” for “using sunlight to animate stardust—in other words, transforming matter and energy into a living creature” (70). Clearly, we need trees more than they need us. By analogy, we need the liberal arts in order to “breathe” educationally, to take in the complexities of our surrounding environment and better understand our place within it. Each of us contributes to the knowledge ecosystem from our own tree-like standpoint, and liberal education in turn enriches the atmosphere for the benefit of all.

2. *Trees are habitats for a wide variety of animals and provide us shade and shelter as well.* Trees provide primary building materials in wood, as well as the wood pulp used in papermaking. Since wood is also a major fuel source, trees keep us warm, literally, on multiple levels—shelter, heat, and the metabolic processes that oxygen cata-

lyzes in our bodies. As Hoffman argues, most “scientific stories about the origins of the human species make us forest-dwellers from the start” (84); our ancestors “probably spent considerable time living in treetops: This arboreal phase, critical to our evolution, has left an indelible stamp on both our body design and the workings of the human mind” (85). Similarly, a liberal arts education provides the materials and metaphors of understanding that can house us for life—from practical and transferable skills to contexts and theories that help us make sense of our ever-changing situations.

3. *Trees are a primary organizing metaphor for our systems of knowledge and genealogy.* Most trees have a single self-supporting trunk which produces secondary limbs called branches. Just as we speak of our “family tree” or the “departmental home” in which we major or teach, trees represent complex genealogies and epistemological systems over time, including some of our most complex data structures (for example, in computational molecular biology—see Lippert). Though we may ultimately branch out from our families or disciplines of origin, we are indebted to these roots. Likewise the concept of a liberal arts education has undergone many historical and institutional transformations, yet its root values and benefits endure (Zakaria).

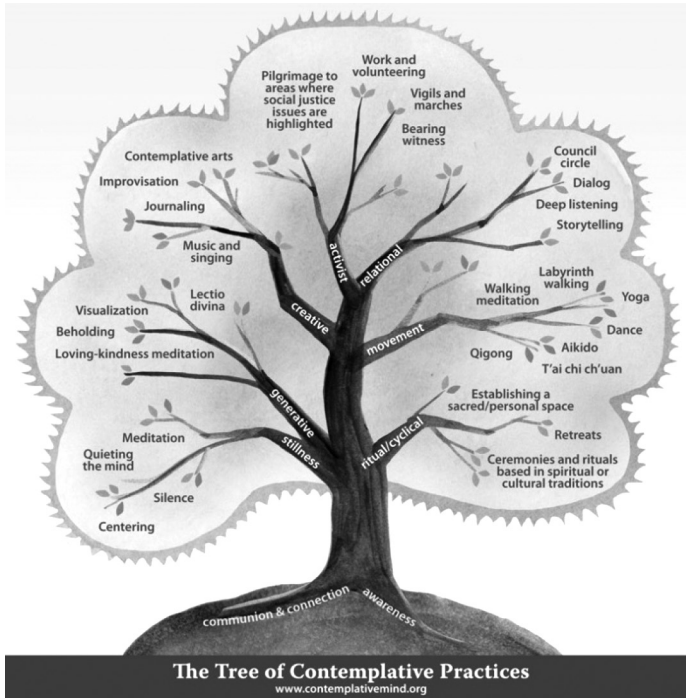
4. *Trees represent other ways of knowing.* In *Finding Your Way in a Wild New World*, Martha Beck argues that the wisest shamans across cultures share four basic techniques: *Wordlessness* (shifting consciousness from the verbal brain to “more creative, intuitive and sensory brain regions”), *Oneness* (sensing “the interconnection between your consciousness and that of beings apparently unconnected to you”), *Imagination* (when “used in a state of nonverbal connection to the world around you [it will] help you achieve [an unprecedented] level of problem-solving”) and *Forming* (which creates in physical reality [whatever] you’ve imagined”) (xxiv). As Beck argues, we tend to use only a fraction of our sensate intelligence and our minds often lead us astray. Thus, as Daniel Pink has noted, these challenging times call for “a whole new mind,” in which both sides of our brain work seamlessly together: the left brain “handles logic,

sequence, literalness and analysis. The right takes care of synthesis, emotional expression, context, and the big picture” (25). Whereas the industrial and information ages in the West clearly prized left-directed thinking, Pink argues convincingly that the cultural pendulum is swinging back to the right brain in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Yet the liberal arts have always stood for the full engagement and expression of *both* hemispheres.

Liberal education should also, therefore, cultivate practices that quiet the left brain and allow us to drop into wordlessness—the essential first step in both individual and planetary transformation. This commitment is visualized in the *Tree of Contemplative Practice*, offered by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society (a nonprofit based in Northampton, MA that seeks to transform the United States into a more balanced hoop-and-tree culture, in part through incorporation of such practices into higher education). This tree stands as an important reminder that some truths cannot be empirically shown or even verbalized. It is to such realization of the ineffable that the best liberal education gestures: a paradoxical reminder that true wisdom is the acceptance of the limits of human knowledge (Seltzer). If, as Bertrand Russell once said, “science is what we know, and philosophy is what we don’t know” (Zakaria 140), the tree of contemplative practice reminds us that *we don’t know what we don’t know*.

5. *Like humans, trees connect and communicate.* As Mancuso summarizes, trees interact with other organisms and each other: “some are opportunists, some are generous, some are honest, and some are manipulators, rewarding those that help them and punishing those that would do them harm” (4). Trees have a massive but hidden root system that provides nutrition and structural stability. As Grant noted of Pando, “Aspen stands are just as complex below ground as above. Their intricate network of roots can ferry nutrients from one part of the clone to another. Roots near an abundant water supply [may] provide water to other roots and shoots in a much drier area. These parts of the clone can return the favor if their roots have access to crucial nutrients missing from the wet area. By distributing its water and nutrients over its entire expanse, a quaking aspen clone

can survive in a patchy environment where other trees might die off” (Grant). Likewise the “roots” of a liberal arts education have the capacity to spread far and wide, grounding and nurturing us as a community even in the “patchy environment” of our fast-paced



and tumultuous 21<sup>st</sup> century.

6. *Some trees supply edible fruits and nuts.* Likewise, liberal learning feeds us – body, mind and soul.

7. *Trees grow incrementally, revealing their age through concentric rings.* National Geographic’s gallery of special trees includes the Discovery Tree sequoia in Calaveras Big Trees State Park in Northern California, a tree originally 280 feet tall that lost its life to speculators who swooped in to commercialize the discovery. Newman notes that Herman Hesse’s observation would be an apt epitaph for this sad occurrence: “When a tree is cut down, and reveals its naked death-wound to the sun, one can read its whole



history in the luminous, inscribed disk of its trunk ... its scars, all the struggle, all the suffering, all the sickness.” Similarly a liberal arts education accretes its wisdom over time, “growing” us in ever-widening circles of knowledge. Amidst the current clamor for assessment of immediate educational outcomes, we must acknowledge that the true impact of liberal education may not be visible for many years to come. Moreover, contra the emphasis on narrow technical or vocational education, there is growing evidence that in terms of viable employment over the life span, a liberal arts degree is a gift that keeps on giving (Skorton and Altschuler; Krebs). More to the point, it need not be opposed to the acquisition of craft, trade, or “maker” skills in their many forms.<sup>4</sup>

8. *Trees are necessarily diverse, as individuals and species.* Likewise, a truly liberal education requires biodiversity to ensure not only that we educate a broader swath of the human populace, but also that our institutions are not myopic – that we assemble enough different perspectives to generate knowledge that is universally beneficial and sound. Thomas Jefferson fought against an “unnatural aristocracy” that was based on “birth, wealth and privilege” (Zakaria 112). He believed that democracy depended on cultivating “those talents which nature had sown as liberally among the poor as the rich, but which perish without use”—thus his emphasis on public education (Zakaria 113). Unfortunately, today our educational system remains “an increasingly powerful mechanism for the intergenerational reproduction of privilege” (Zakaria 114). Yet in the forest as in the academy, diversity strengthens the ecosystem. We must commit wholeheartedly to cultivating it, or we will be able to see neither trees nor forest.

9. *Like humans, trees are adaptable – and many were brought here through migration.* Those that persist have shown tremendous adaptability in environments not originally their own, the Japanese cherry (Newman) and Georgia peach being only a few prominent examples (Cardozo and Subramaniam 9). Likewise, the liberal arts must adapt to changing times and contexts, including less funding and greater intellectual and social diversity. Of what should liberal education now consist? One thing is for sure: to prove resilient, the

concept may have to change in some ways. But as anyone who loves peaches may attest, who knows? With cultivation, perhaps we may find even juicier adaptations of the liberal arts in our educational orchards! Regardless, the “solution to the problems of a liberal education is more—and better—liberal education” (Zakaria 105). Just so, part of the solution to the planetary crisis of climate change is more trees—planted, tended, and appreciated for all that they are and all that they do.

10. *Trees are witnesses as well as victims.* In cultural works—e.g. extensive use of tree imagery in Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (Tjerngren) or Billie Holiday’s haunting “Strange Fruit”—trees feature prominently as silent witnesses or props for the worst humans can do to one another. The *National Geographic* photo gallery includes the Fredricksburg, VA catalpas known as Civil War witness trees, under which the amputated limbs of soldiers were piled during hasty war-time surgery (Newman). Often, trees are also injured in the crossfire of human bellicosity. Of the witness trees at Gettysburg, Military National Park historian John Heiser explains that “Each [soldier] had around 60 rounds of ammunition, and everybody expended all of it...That’s a lot of lead flying ... and the trees were the unhappy recipients of most of it (Ruane).”

But trees also witness the best that humans can become, as in the infamous Bodhi tree watching over the Buddha’s enlightenment. They also stand for ancient connections and ritual, as Sue Monk Kidd notes of the enslaved women in her novel, *The Invention of Wings*: the spirit tree “centers Handful and her mother, gives them a sense of belonging to one another, as well as to the earth and the divine. It gives them a portal into somewhere that transcends where they are, a sense of faith” (Haupt). Indeed, according to Rachel Elizabeth Harding, most African religions reflected “a powerful, shielding spirit whose roots and branches represent the links between the spiritual and material worlds, as well as the connections between living human beings and their ancestors. The Africans who came across the Atlantic as slaves carried with them this tradition of recognizing a sacred tree as the dwelling of a protective divinity and as a symbol of their own relationship to spirit and to lineage” (268).

Today our educational systems are more challenged than ever by debt, illness, loss, trauma, and the struggle for individual and institutional survival on many levels. In a historically masculine academy that has prized rationality above all else, can we cultivate our own spirit trees—summoning up the requisite emotional intelligence and empathy to witness and heal our own wounding and that of others? As Pink argues, this new era “requires androgynous minds,” because sometimes “we need detachment” and “many other times we need attunement....the people who will thrive will be those who can toggle between the two” (174). Such an opening of the heart is more likely to be the result of liberal education than professional training, even when such training occurs in the healing professions (Silbersweig). If professions tend to emphasize the *how* or *what* of a career, the liberal arts insist on asking: *why*? As immersed as we may become in any given pursuit, the hoop and tree of liberal learning call us back, always, to larger questions of meaning, purpose, and connection.

11. *Trees are sentient—or are they?* The question of what trees feel warns us against the dangerously anthropomorphic view that fails to acknowledge the experience of other living beings and our mutual interdependence. A slate of recent research may affirm what was often denounced when Jagadish Chandra Bose in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century or Peter Tompkins and Christopher Bird in *The Secret Life of Plants* (1973) claimed that trees and other plants are sentient beings with unrecognized capacities. Today, *Brilliant Green* by Mancuso and Viola (2015) argues not only that plants are sentient, but deserving of rights in an age that some say is headed toward “the sixth extinction” (Hance).

In *The Hidden Life of Trees*, Peter Wohlleben argues that “Much like human families, tree parents live together with their children, communicate with them, and support them as they grow, sharing nutrients with those who are sick or struggling and creating an ecosystem that mitigates the impact of extremes of heat and cold for the whole group. As a result of such interactions, trees in a family or community are protected and can live to be very old. In contrast, solitary trees, like street kids, have a tough time [and often]

die much earlier than those in a group.” While educators know that our students are sentient beings, do we take *their* experiences and perspectives seriously enough? How much are traditional pedagogies limited by an inability to consider what it is students actually feel, see, or hear and an emphasis on individual rather than collective achievement? Paulo Freire famously criticized the “banking method of education” that views students as mere individual vessels into which we pour information. How might liberal education be an ecosystem “that mitigates the impact of extremes” for all, fostering greater communal benefit?

12. *Trees help us see what we otherwise cannot.* Anyone who loves walking in the woods knows how LOUD trees can be. For species that do not technically “speak,” they sure do make an awful lot of noise. Some of this sound is generated by their physicality but much of it results from interaction with the elements. The creaking of limbs, the rustling of leaves, the sound and sight of trees in motion enables us to “see” what is technically invisible to us – namely, the wind. Likewise, a liberal education brings out what we may not typically see, or fail to notice, in our everyday interactions with social and natural environments. Like the arts, it involves making the familiar strange. As Russian literary critic Victor Shlovsky wrote in coining the term *defamiliarization*, habituation (what psychologist Ellen Langer has called *mindlessness*) “devours works, clothes, furniture, one’s wife and the fear of war. [Art] exists that one may recover the sensation of life: it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony” (Richter). Everyday life grooves us to automation and unconscious behaviors: the liberal arts, including the practice of fine arts, challenges our perceptions and asks to see our surroundings anew.

13. *Trees beautify both natural and altered landscapes.* I commute to MCLA along the Mohawk Trail. Sometimes I feel compelled to pull over and just stare – the vista, a public arboretum, is so breathtaking. Beyond all of their material contributions, there is an aesthetic and spiritual aspect to trees that cannot be denied, whether it is the graceful delicacy of a willow tree, the glory of a red maple or the regal candle-like bearing of an ancient pine – they point us to the

heavens, to an idea of divinity, to all that eludes our earthly minds. This is why the arts and humanities must endure in any system that cares to call itself educational. The arts draw us out in a unique way, by asking us to consider not only the sources of creativity, but the act of creation as the source of life. The arts and humanities traffic in what cannot be fully accounted for by empiricism, while acknowledging language itself as a mere stand-in for Truth. If “tree” is a key to a rich and varied set of practices and meanings over time, liberal education is, like Pando, a vast system rooting us in what it means to be both animals and fully human.

14. *Trees are exploited and endangered. Harvested for their many purposes, they are at risk.* Shel Silverstein’s infamously divisive children’s book, *The Giving Tree*, comes to mind. In this parable, the tree gives of all its parts to her beloved Boy until nothing remains but a stump, which even then provides a place for the now elderly man to rest upon: “and the tree was happy.” But as Jackson and Dell pointed out in “The Other Giving Tree” (1979), there are many less sanguine ways to look at that story of endless taking. Likewise, as I have argued elsewhere (2016), the precarious adjunct teaching sector in higher education today is predominantly female, its nurturing role a sacrificial one in a capitalist society that takes much from, but gives little back to, either its trees or its educators. The adjuncts organizing for equity through such advocacy groups as New Faculty Majority might prefer Madeleine Brand’s alternative ending to *The Giving Tree*: “The tree, now just a stump, saw the boy coming and said, ‘nu-uh not this time.’ She pulled herself up by her roots and said, ‘I love you, but find someplace else to sit.’ And she was very happy” (quoted in Belkin). Trees are endangered on a planet that is bent on environmental destruction through overdevelopment. Likewise, education is similarly threatened as we overdevelop certain capacities at the expense of others, as we fail to invest in cultivating balanced “hoop and tree” societies that can weather change and time.

The above list invites our attention to paradoxes of rootedness and exploration, constancy and change, suffering and healing, materiality and metaphor. Ultimately, though, the fullest expression of our humanity requires spending time with the real trees that have oxygenated, fed, shaded, sheltered,

and whispered their truth to us for millennia.

Thanks to the Kestrel Land Trust, I recently (March 11, 2016) had the opportunity to go on a field trip led by Michael Wojtech, author of the field guide *Bark*. In introducing the event, Wojtech recalled his frenzied panic as a conservation biology student rushing to complete his field research on trees before a pending autumn storm brought down the last of the leaves. In that exigent moment, Wojtech wondered: why *are* leaves the major focus of tree identification? In New England, trees are *without* leaves for more months of the year than they have leaves. Thus bark is at least as useful, if not more so, as a means of differentiation. But as Tom Wessels notes in his Foreword to *Bark*, “Michael had ventured into a task far more complex,” for reasons that this example of the black birch may show:

The bark of black birch goes through four distinct transformations as the tree matures from a sapling to an old-growth monarch. The tree starts out with smooth, black bark etched with horizontal, white lenticels. After about 50 years, the smooth bark starts to crack open, creating vertical fissures. By 100 years of age, these fissures develop into large rectangular plates that curl away from the trunk. At 150 years, most of the rectangular plates are shed, leaving the tree once again with smooth bark—this time lacking lenticels. When a black birch is two centuries old, the bark develops vertical ridges, making it look like some sort of exotic oak” (xii).

At midlife my own bark has begun to show its cracks and fissures! Likewise, with time, the skin of the liberal arts tree has begun to curl away from its trunk, and we are left to wonder what will happen when more of its plates are shed. And yet, the tree still stands.

The most important lesson of *Bark* lies not in information about any particular tree, but in its larger call to really *look* with an ecological mindset at the complex environment around us, with its tremendous diversity of flora and fauna, including both human and non-human animals. As Wojtech writes:

As you focus on bark—and improve your ability to see—other, equally intimate layers of the forest also become apparent. You may notice the woodpecker mining for ants on a tree trunk; see the fox scat on a nearby rock; spot the flowers of an early spring hepatica, almost hidden among last year’s leaves. There are always new discoveries to be made... The art of seeing, and the connection to place, grows exponentially when you learn to stop and observe” (xiv).

This brings to mind the famous quote from Marcel Proust’s voluminous *Remembrance of Things Past* (volume 5, *The Prisoner*):



if we visited Mars or Venus keeping the same senses, they would clothe in the same aspect as the things of the earth everything that we [saw]. **The only true voyage of discovery...would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is** (Thompson).

Proust was speaking of the insights that great artists provide. But we might say the same of liberal education, which allows us to see with other eyes, including the non-human perspective of the natural world. Indeed, for all his specialization as a conservation biologist, Wojtech described himself on the field trip as “a committed generalist,” which is certainly borne out by his interest in the role that trees play within the larger ecosystem and his observation that many people feel “an overriding, foundational desire to make connections with the land where they live, work, or play, be it a wild preserve or a wooded urban lot” (xiii). Again, tree meets hoop.

Today more than ever, a true liberal arts education requires understanding that we are one with the trees. As Martha Beck has said of the four “technologies of magic” that could heal the planet—*wordlessness, oneness, imagination* and *forming*—we must first be willing to recede into silence to redraw the hoop of connection to all living things; we must be able to imagine a world whose cultural and economic principles are based on “The Natural Step” of sustainability (Hoffman 191) and work to realize this vision through effort and action. As Hoffman has written, “the Hoop-and-Tree shape of wholeness says that at our best we are all ecological beings and we all belong here. We are home (26).” At its best, the liberal arts, too, offer a home for life. In the same way environmental activists fight to save the trees, we must commit to preserving the enduring shelter and shade of liberal education.<sup>5</sup>

## Works Cited

- Adorno, Theodor W. “The Essay as Form.” In *Notes to Literature: Volume One*. Ed. Rolf Tiedemann. Trans. Sherry Weber Nicholson. New York: Columbia UP, 1991. 3-23. Print.
- Arnold, Chris. “Economists Say Millenials Should Consider Careers in Trades.” *National Public Radio*, 02 February 2015. [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org). Web. 5 May 2009.
- Beck, Martha. *Finding Your Way in a Wild New World: Reclaim Your Own Na-*

- ture to Create the Life You Want*. New York: Atria (Simon and Schuster), 2012. Print.
- Belkin, Lisa. "Children's Books You (Might) Hate." *The New York Times*, 08 September 2010. Web. 5 May 2016.
- Berrett, Dan. "Why A 'Big Picture Education' is More Important Than Ever." Interview with Carol Geary Schneider. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 12 May 2016. [www.chronicle.com](http://www.chronicle.com). Web. 16 May 2016.
- Browning, Elizabeth Barrett. "How Do I Love Thee? Let Me Count the Ways (Sonnet 43)." In *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. London: Caradoc Press, 1906. *Project Gutenberg*, 13 January 2015. [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). Web. 05 May 2016.
- Cardozo, Karen. "Academic Labor: Who Cares?" *Critical Sociology*. April 27, 2016. doi:10.1177/0896920516641733
- Cardozo, Karen and Banu Subramaniam. "Assembling Asian/American Nature-cultures: Orientalism and Invited Invasions." *Journal of Asian American Studies* 16:1 (February) 2013. 1-23.
- "Tree of Contemplative Practices." Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. n.d. [www.contemplativemind.org](http://www.contemplativemind.org). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990. Print.
- Cook, Gina. "The True Story of 'True.'" Ted-Ed online. N.d. [www.Ed.ted.com](http://www.Ed.ted.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Crawford, Matthew. *Shopclass as Soulcraft; An Inquiry into the Value of Work*. New York: Penguin, 2009. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Trans. Brian Massumi. U of MN Press, 1987. *Project Lamar*. N.d. [www.projectlamar.com](http://www.projectlamar.com) Web. 5 May 2016.
- Grant, Michael. "The Trembling Giant." *Discover Magazine*. October 1993. Web. 5 May 2016.
- Hance, Jeremy. "Are Plants Intelligent?" *The Guardian*, 04 August 2015. [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Harding, Rachel Elizabeth. "You Got a Right to the Tree of Life: African American Spirituals and Religions of the Diaspora." *CrossCurrents* 57.2 (2007): 266-280.
- Hanford, Emily. "A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Vocational High School." *American Radio Works* online, 11 September 2014. [www.americanradioworks.org](http://www.americanradioworks.org) Web. 5 May 2016.

- Haupt, Jennifer. "Sue Monk Kidd: The Invention of Wings." *Psychology Today* online, April 2014. [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Hoffman, Chris. *The Hoop and the Tree: A Compass for Finding a Deeper Relationship With All Life*. San Francisco: Council Oaks Books, 2000. Print.
- Jackson, Jacqueline, and Carol Dell. "The Other Giving Tree." *Language Arts* 56.4 (1979): 427–429. Web. 5 May 2016.
- Kidd, Sue Monk. *The Invention of Wings*. New York: Penguin, 2014. Print.
- Krebs, Paula. "Adding Good Data to Good Stories." *Inside Higher Ed* online, 22 April 2016. [www.insidehighered.com](http://www.insidehighered.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Langer, Ellen. *Mindfulness*. Cambridge, MA: DaCapo Press, 1989. Print.
- Lippert, Ross. "Suffix Trees." [http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/mathematics/18-417-introduction-to-computational-molecular-biology-fall-2004/lecture-notes/lecture\\_11.pdf](http://ocw.mit.edu/courses/mathematics/18-417-introduction-to-computational-molecular-biology-fall-2004/lecture-notes/lecture_11.pdf) Web. 5 May 2016.
- Mancuso, Stefano and Alessandra Viola. *The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*. Trans. Joan Benham. Washington, DC: New Island Press, 2015. Print.
- Massumi, Brian. Foreword. *A Thousand Plateaus* by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. U of MN Press, 1987. Project Lamar N.d. [www.projectlamar.com](http://www.projectlamar.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Morrison, Toni. *Beloved*. New York: Vintage, 1989. Print.
- Morton, Ella. "Utah has a Forest Full of Golden Clones." *Slate* magazine, 06 May 2014. [www.slate.com](http://www.slate.com). Web 5 May 2016.
- Newman, Cathy. "Remarkable Trees." *National Geographic*, April 2014. [www.news.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.news.nationalgeographic.com). Web. 5 May 2009.
- Pink, Daniel. *A Whole New Mind: Why Right-Brainers Will Rule the Future*. New York, Riverhead Books, 2006. Print.
- Pollan, Michael. Foreword. *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence* by Stefano Mancuso and Alessandra Viola. Trans. Joan Benham. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015.
- Rose, Mike. *The Mind at Work: Valuing the Intelligence of the American Worker*. New York: Penguin Books, 2004. Print.
- Ruane, Michael. "Gettysburg Battle Bullets Found Embedded in Tree." *The Washington Post*, 09 August 2011. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Seltzer, Leon. "The Wisest Quotes on Wisdom." *Psychology Today*, 03 April 2012. [www.psychologytoday.com](http://www.psychologytoday.com) Web. 5 May 2009.
- Shlovsky, Victor. "Art as Technique." In *Critical Traditions: Classic Texts and*

- Contemporary Trends*. 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Ed. David Richter. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's. 774-784. Print.
- Silbersweig, David. "A Harvard Medical Professor Makes the Case for the Liberal Arts and Philosophy." *The Washington Post*, 24 December 2015. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Silverstein, Shel. *The Giving Tree*. Harper and Row, 1964. Print.
- Skorton, David and Glenn Altschuler. "Does Your Major Matter?" *Forbes Magazine*, 29 October 2012. [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Tjerngren, Moa. "Trunk and Branches - Aspects of Tree Imagery in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*." May 2009. <http://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:233654/FULLTEXT01.pdf>. Web. 5 May 2016.
- Tompkins, Peter and Christopher Bird. *The Secret Life of Plants*. Harper and Row, 1973.
- Thompson, Craig. "What Marcel Proust Really Said About Seeing with New Eyes." 17 December 2013. [www.clearingcustoms.net](http://www.clearingcustoms.net). Web. 5 May 2016.
- Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. [www.tavaana.org](http://www.tavaana.org) N.d. Web. 5 May 2016.
- Wojtech, Michael. *Bark: A Field Guide to Trees of the Northeast*. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2011. Print.
- Wohlleben, Peter. *The Hidden Life of Trees: What they Feel, How They Communicate—Discoveries from a Secret World*. Greystone Books, (forthcoming) 2016. [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) Web. 5 May 2016.
- Zakaria, Fareed. *In Defense of a Liberal Education*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2015. Print.

## Endnotes

- 1 For example, according to Newman, "scientists have estimated that "New York City's 600,000 street trees provide an annual benefit of \$122 million in pollutant removal, carbon sequestration, and building energy reduction."
- 2 In context, Roland Barthes wrote: "Interdisciplinary work [is] not about confronting already constituted disciplines (none of which, in fact, is willing to let go). To do something interdisciplinary, it is not enough to use a "subject" (a theme) and gather around it two or three sciences. Interdisciplinarity

consists of creating a “new” object that belongs to no one (qtd. in Clifford & Marcus 1990, p. 1).

3 Elizabeth Barrett Browning’s famous sonnet seems to work just as well as a love song to trees:

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday’s  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.

4 As a career counselor as well as a faculty member, I don’t want to further an uncritical dichotomy between liberal and vocational education. I prefer to think in integrative terms about “the liberal arts at work.” Recent commentators agree that it is time to rethink the historical schism that has separated students (too often in classist, racist and/or sexist ways) into technical/vocational versus college-bound tracks. See, for example, Arnold and Hanford on efforts to blend both academic and vocational education. Matthew Crawford and Mike Rose, in addition, offer nuanced defenses of crafts, trades and “blue collar” work that complicate and undermine familiar binaries, highlighting the complementary relation between mind and body, brain and hand, or philosophic and pragmatic value.

# The Metamorphoses of Ovid's Women and Trees.

BY NANCY CICCONE

Trees frequent the landscape of Ovid's first-century *Metamorphoses*. Sometimes they figure in legends of origin, so as to provide a poetic inheritance from the beginnings of Western civilization. Many of Ovid's trees were once women. In a well-known example, Daphne begs for help as she flees the love-struck god, Apollo. She escapes – sort of. She is gifted with bark, rather than abduction. As a Laurel tree, she supplies the crowns for victors who win either with military arms or with poetic words as is suitable for Apollo's immortal purview. Although sexually unavailable, she remains useful to men who demonstrate prowess. The tree-Daphne validates their activities. She provides the stamp of approval.

One of Ovid's less noted transformations of women into trees occurs within the Orpheus legend (Bk 11). The Thracian women of Ciconia, under the spell of the wine-god, Bacchus, tear the poet Orpheus apart. Their motive stems from jealousy either of his ability to tame wild animals with his lyre or



from his fondness for men after the loss of his wife. As Bacchantes, they were, after all, entitled to freedom from care, reveling in a religious ritual to ensure all kinds of fertility. But Bacchus punishes their homicide. He roots them, deprives them of any movement, incases them in Oak Trees. Ovid, as usual, describes their transformation in excruciating detail, through their consciousness. To paraphrase: their toes elongate into roots so that any struggle binds them more firmly. They watch the bark creeping up their legs. In grief, they beat on their thighs only to find oak. As Ovid writes, "Her breasts also become oak; oaken her shoulders" (XI 82-83).<sup>1</sup> Arms, as expected, transform to branches. They may grow but they do not run...lest they destroy another poet... like Ovid.

Ovid relies on the Latin "rubor" to denote oak. It is also the name for the lower and stronger part of the Roman prison built by Servius Tullius.<sup>2</sup> Oak wood is a hard one, useful for domiciles, furniture, weapons, warships, and, of course, Bacchus's wine barrels. On one hand, the women are roundly punished and contained. On the other hand, they are securely housed and protected; the Ciconians are safe in their wooden chambers. The episode lends itself to cultural parallels on the status of women from Ovid's era to our own. Social constraints frequently just replace bark. Movement is limited, dependent on the danger of venturing out in the dark, or even in the light, wherever they find themselves planted. Often their histories are lost. The economy depends on them, but not so you would notice because they survive in the background. In many places, their pay does not equal that of men, when they are paid at all. The majority of women furnish the environment of the money-making landscape. They theoretically have freedom of movement but not the means to do so. Their households depend on them just as the earth depends on trees.

Those who know estimate over 600 species of oak trees. Slow to start, they may survive well past 150 years. Healthy trees branch out. They grow horizontally and vertically. Some reach over sixty-five feet with crowns exceeding seventy feet. Growth rings and height record their history. They process carbon dioxide and transform it into oxygen. They also sequester the carbon. They ably multitask, but not so you would notice: the clean air is invisible. Like women, they transform their surroundings. They halt erosion. They sacrifice their autumn leaves to refresh their soil. Spring cleaning brings new foliage, *Shading wild strawberries and violets,/Or the lark's nest*, as Letitia Elizabeth Landon writes.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, they withstand high winds and torrents. Some break. Some die. Some endure the violence and manage to

live with it. Some give way to bacterial and fungal diseases, to herding and wildlife. And some produce seedlings. If lucky, they take a stand, and they make their home a forest.

Ovid, however, implies another tongue-in-cheek utility for the Ciconians, especially in a forest. For oak trees host the galls that produce the ink that produces the poetic record of the women of Ciconia. The process of manufacturing begins with the wasp that enters the gall and relies on it to house, feed, and protect its young. The larvae produce a chemical reaction. The galls themselves can become so heavy as to break a branch. Once a hole indicates the wasp's departure, the emptied galls can be harvested. Just as for women, fertilization must be timed correctly to maximize output. Warm water and iron added to the crushed galls darken over time to form a permanent and waterproof ink. The ink was in use for over fifteen centuries, from Ovid's first century and beyond the Middle Ages. For the modern craft-minded writer, this ink can replace that in cartridges for ink jet printers. Like Daphne, the women of Ciconia turn out to be useful. They enable the preservation of writing, including that which contains them.

Ovid's trees are in dialogue with those of his established, older contemporary: Vergil. Lauded as the poet supportive of Augustus's empiric ambitions, Vergil shares his audience with the younger poet. But their perspectives differ, even though they grew from the same Roman soil. In one example from the *Aeneid*, the Latin Turnus threatens Trojan ships with fire (IX). He runs into trouble. The "black pitch pines and trunks of maple" harvested to build the ships come from a Thracian grove sacred to the great mother goddess, Cybele.<sup>4</sup> She runs to her son, Jove, and prays he protects them from "wave" and "whirlwind" "in their journeying" (IX.117). At first, Jove balks: "hulls made by the hands of mortals should have the immortals' privilege" (IX.123-24)? He finally strikes a deal: once the ships have brought Aeneas to Italy's shores, Jove shall allow "those galleys to take on/ the shapes of goddesses of the great waters" (IX.132-33). As the fire nears, the great mother commands ("genetrix iubet") the wood to escape the mortal hands that fashioned them into utensils (9.117). In the economy of war, the spectacle panics Turnus and his allies; the event foreshadows their defeat. The trees, now nymphs, however, are not finished. Unlike the women of Ciconia, they are not punished; their transformation wins freedom of movement, at least in the sea. They swim out to encircle Aeneas's ship, returning from gathering forces to his side for battle. The nymphs bring him news, alert him to ambush, to the danger for Aeneas's son, barracked with Trojans and surrounded by Latins back on shore. The Great Mother takes care of her own even in the face of building an empire.

Ovid cares not for empire. In his *Epistulae ex Ponto*, he attributes his exile from Rome to “a mistake” (*culpa*) not a “crime” (*scelus*) (I.6.26). Augustus pens him in Tomis, the Eastern boundary of the empire. Ovid sends letters from there, but he dies without ever being able to return to his beloved city. Like Vergil’s Cybele, however, Ovid’s Bacchus immortalizes the women of Ciconia. Although his books are banned from Roman libraries during his exile, Ovid’s poem endures. At the end of his *Metamorphoses*, he asserts its escape from “the wrath of Jove,” “fire,” “sword” and the “gnawing tooth of time”: throughout the ages, [he] shall live (XV. 871-79). The women of Ciconia live with him. They remain, however, inscribed in their story, stuck, rather than swimming sea nymphs. Ovid has memorialized the Ciconians. The trees may die but their record lives on to nourish their readers. Their sacred groves become those of academe, responsible for the conservation of knowledge. For ages, the women are sequestered in the books made from sister trees. They take root in Western culture. They garner the attention of men who authorize their scholarly endeavors by translating and analyzing the Ovidian corpus. A masterpiece in the literary canon, his poetry can be found in just about every Western Library. The work of many women poets, such as Letitia Elizabeth Landon, however, can be found only on the internet, if lucky.

Ovid’s words stand the test of time. But audiences change. They interpret, hone in on the space between the story and its meanings. Words grow, as trees do, and swim in the sea of a culture. They too have histories, and adapt and adopt as is suitable for a vocabulary. New words—imported, invented, repurposed—fertilize language within their linguistic boundaries. When they meet up with each other, they form sentences, stories, a forest of words, and their imprisonment allows them to circulate among others. There they are open to interpretation. They form attachments. The words join synchronic and diachronic conversations, commenting on dead and broken languages. Some branch into novel combinations. And others are probably lost.

Perhaps one day, a woman studying Latin comes to the legend of the women of Ciconia, and with chin on hand, late at night, at her desk, she shakes her head and says aloud, “No. That can’t be right.” And she takes up the task to fix the story. In her version, the Ciconians ignore the poet Orpheus. He is not telling their stories; why care about his sexual proclivities, which, indeed, buffer their safety? Perhaps they do tear him apart because they think they will achieve the fame of his talent if they take it. Then Cybele intervenes, following Vergil’s model, and bends immortal rules. As the ecstasy and drunkenness wears off, the Ciconians stretch out in the proverbial, dew-drenched field. They luxuriate in the simplicity of being whole. As the sun rises, they hear the

updraft of rustling leaves in the forest. Words drift to them, perhaps from the murmurings of lovers seeking shelter under the trees' branches, perhaps from their own sentience, perhaps from Jove himself, known to speak through the sacred oak leaves. The women gather up the words; they decide to make stories. And when they read their work aloud from their tablets, they saucily don a military symbol: the *Corona Civica*, the crown of oak leaves. Each day before they take up tablets, however, they meet in the meadow. Some go together, some alone. Each one plants an oak tree.

## NOTES

- 1 Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, refer to line numbers in Frank Justus Miller's translation in Loeb Classical Library edition, vol 2 (Cambridge, MA., 1976).
- 2 See entry in Lewis & Short dictionary.
- 3 Letitia Elizabeth Landon (1802-1838) published poems and novels under the initials L. E. L. Her poem "The Oak" appeared in her collection , *The Improvisatrice*. The first lines are: "...It is the last survivor of a race/ Strong in their forest-pride when I was young" (Hurst, Robinson & Co., 1824). The poem came to me via Poem-a-Day/Poets.org, 3/12/16, and is in the public domain.
- 4 Quotations from Vergil are from Mandelbaum's translation of the *Aeneid* (NY: Bantam, 1981)

# The Mother Tree

IRENE WILLIS

*Too old to chain*, the tree man said.  
*It should come down. Dead inside.*  
But I resisted, even though another limb  
had crashed, just missing the roof.  
*How old is it?* I asked. *About eighty-five*,  
he said, all of twenty-five himself. *But*  
*that's young, isn't it?* *For a tree?* I said,  
patting the thick trunk, looking up  
through leaved branches, thinking  
I was always younger than the tree I thought  
would survive us when we bought the house,  
this tree the reason – or one of them.  
I looked at it every morning at breakfast,  
carried coffee out to sit under it afternoons,  
loved the way it shaded where it stood.  
*Not this kind*, the young man said,  
and repeated, *It's dead inside*. His final  
argument. I gave in. Yesterday six men  
arrived in hard white hats, green shirts,  
and milled about in serious conference.  
*Get rid of the debris*, I said, *but save*  
*the mother part*. What I have now  
is a five-foot-wide stump – orange,  
like half of a giant pumpkin, the kind  
my mother would never bake into pies.  
I lost her long before she died, at eighty-five.

# Passing

MEGAN SNYDER-CAMP

They'd eat the inner bark of birches, maybe,  
or the wild strawberries or deer

if they could get it, if they knew  
what was good and what was not,

if these men were even in the woods still,  
where the policemen wandered

for weeks, forlorn, if they are even  
in America anymore, if instead the police

will wander this forest forever, hand  
in hand, these woods no one has ever loved.

Skunk and porcupine and black bear  
the shape of our crimes. Black bear

the murder, black bear the restraint.  
Black bear our nightly rehearsal

to leave one life and enter another,  
black bear the passages we made,

black bear the mercy we made for ourselves  
passing through. America is distracted

by the white woman passing as black  
and the difference between or the mistake in—



in which we tunnel, taking care not to uproot  
what already grows here, the established

and unthirsty, whose place  
this is, our secret instead to enter

this life from beneath, taking up the pattern  
and thirst of this place, the play of light

across what we became.

# The Brush Pickers

MEGAN SNYDER-CAMP

Some say when they come through  
they leave everything behind,

salal and cedar picked clean but in their wake  
a trail of rubber bands, sandwich wrappers, toilet paper.

When I was young I had a friend  
who dropped all his trash gently on the ground.

To hide it away is a fucking lie he said.  
Well the neighbors liked their forest the way it was.

Now on Valentine's Day  
their own green comes back to them in cellophane.

Some say the brush pickers  
carry 70-lb bags strapped to their forehead

as in South America/as in Africa.  
Some say not even a knife.

I've never seen them  
but they say it's like locusts

the wall of them passing through you  
breaking off every little stem.

The salal can go days without water.  
Some say no when they come through it's quiet

each picker on a different ridge  
either way the pickers are dropped off at dawn  
and leave a trail of blue-string bundles  
to find their way back.

Sometimes the van doesn't return.  
Here is where the extra lives. The shining extra,  
the leased-out extra of the forest floor,  
the unkillable green that steadies a vase.

# From *Stories from “America”*

BY WAYNE SALAZAR

2.

Now that most of Appalachia's underground coalmines have been exhausted, coalmining corporations have taken to blasting the tops off mountains to expose coal seams near the surface. Perhaps a hundred vertical feet of rock will be removed to get at a seam ten feet high. The “overburden,” as the rocky mountaintop is called, is dumped into valleys, burying streams and polluting water that towns rely on for drinking, bathing, and cooking. Mountaintops stripped of vegetation cannot absorb rainwater, which rushes down mountainsides in flash floods that sometimes wash away entire communities.

About ten years ago I went to a public hearing at the U.S. Department of Interior to hear Appalachian coalfield residents testify against a proposed rule change. The administration of George W. Bush was accepting public comment on its plan to modify a regulation that required surface mine operators to maintain an undisturbed buffer zone alongside streams. The proposed modification would shrink the buffer zone by two-thirds. A few dozen impoverished Appalachians testified about their destroyed homes, their brown tap water, and their decimated property values. One coal industry lobbyist testified about the benefits deregulation would bring in the form of increased mine productivity.

Eventually it seemed everyone had spoken. The man running the hearing asked if there were any other speakers. On the spur of the moment, I raised my hand. I said that after hearing all these people testify about destroyed landscapes and destroyed waterways and destroyed homes and destroyed lives, the answer to the question of whether or not to approve the rule modification was clearly no. But, I said, the only voice you'll hear today is the voice of the lobbyist, because he's the man with the money.

The Bush administration subsequently approved the rule modification.

Years of advocacy and court fights have not stopped mountaintop removal coal mining, but environmentalists and coalfield residents keep trying. I met up with a community organizer in Charleston, West Virginia. He drove me to a spot where I could see a mountaintop removal mine southeast of the city. Despite their size, these mines are fairly well hidden, and very well guarded, so I never could have found an access point alone.

Along the road we passed a coal train, car after car of coal, stretching as far as I could see. We rounded a bend, and the train continued stretching out of sight around the next bend. I've never seen such a long train. The organizer says there are typically 100 cars to a train. If you figure the length of each car at an industry average of 60 feet, then the train is more than a mile long. It didn't appear to be moving until we got to the loader, when I could see it inch forward as the car was filled with coal. More empty cars stretched around another bend. In some places, trains like this are loaded with a mixture of coal from surface and underground mines. But here, this train carried only coal from a blasted mountaintop.

We drove up the mountain on a dirt road to a cabin. It had been the home of the late Larry Gibson, who fought against mountaintop removal. Every year a couple of hundred people gather there to hear music in his honor. Larry made sure that some the land he owned, which had been in his family for 300 years, would be protected from mining. But it was just a short walk to the nearest surface mine.

As we watched a cloud of dust rise from a dynamite blast in the distance, the organizer told me how he got involved in the fight against mountaintop removal. He'd grown up in this area and worked for a mining corporation as a logistics coordinator and human resources manager. But then one day his hometown was washed away in a flood and he started looking into why that had happened. As he learned about the impacts of mountaintop removal, he began volunteering with the local chapter of the Sierra Club. When he started to become known for his volunteer work, he lost his job. The mining corporation said it no longer needed a logistics coordinator or human resources

manager and was phasing out those positions.

He pointed down the mountain to a dirt construction road. A red truck was driving along it in our general direction.

"That's the security guard, coming up to get us off Keystone Coal's land," he said. "We're trespassing."

3.

The community organizer took me to see some old metal storage tanks on the bank of the Elk River. Charleston is built at the convergence of the Elk and Kawaha Rivers, and draws its water from the Elk, because the Kawaha has been polluted by decades of coal and chemical-industry operations. No one gave much thought to what sits upstream on the Elk; it's just the cleaner river and it has served the city's and surrounding countryside's 300,000 inhabitants well.

Or did, until January 6, 2014. That day, people around town started smelling something sweet in the air. Kind of like licorice, some said; others thought cotton candy. It was strange enough and strong enough that people started calling the state Department of Environmental Protection.

No one knew what it was. At some point, someone thought, "I wonder if something's up at Freedom Industries."

So DEP sent an inspector over to Freedom Industries and he sat in the office and he heard Freedom's manager say that everything was just fine at the facility, which stored a chemical used to separate coal from rock.

"Well, I'll just have a look around," said the inspector, and as he started out the building a worker came up to him and said, "Uh, yeah, actually we do have a little problem over here."

They walked over to a storage tank that had a hole in it. Someone at Freedom Industries had tried to plug the hole with some material, which absorbed what it could and then did nothing to stop the sweet-smelling chemical from running into the Elk River.

Three hundred thousand people lost their water that day. For two weeks, water use of any kind was banned. The people who washed in it anyway got terrible rashes. FEMA showed up and distributed water at various sites around town, except on the west side.

The west side of Charleston is heavily African American.

Up in the hollows, a lot of people couldn't get to distribution sites. They didn't have cars and it was too far to haul water on foot. Community organizers set up some distribution sites at churches nearby, but the water only lasted so long.

By July, DEP said the water was safe, but the organizer who told me this story wasn't so sure. He still buys bottled water.

11.

On my way out of Albuquerque, New Mexico I stopped at Coronado State Park, where I saw ruins of the Kuaua (pronounced kwah-wah) Pueblo. The ranger was a knowledgeable young man who told me the history of the pueblo. Their website explains it well:

In 1540, Francisco Vázquez de Coronado—with 500 soldiers and 2,000 Indian allies from New Spain—entered the Rio Grande valley somewhere near this site. Coronado was searching for the fabled Seven Cities of Gold. Instead of treasure, he found a dozen villages inhabited by prosperous native farmers. These newly “discovered” people spoke Tiwa, and their ancestors had already been living in this area for thousands of years. Coronado called them: Los Indios de los Pueblos or Pueblo Indians. He and his men visited all twelve Tiwa villages during the course of the next two years because they survived on food and other supplies that they obtained from them. Without the assistance of the Tiwas (willing or unwilling), Coronado and his men very likely would have starved to death.

At first the Spaniards were welcomed and the Tiwas gladly shared their food, of which they had plenty. In this arid land, they never knew when a drought might come, so they stored a great deal of food in underground kivas.





Coronado and his men (and his allies and their slaves and animals) feasted on it until it ran out.

Later Spaniards used up supplies throughout the region, infuriating the native people. In 1680, one of the pueblo leaders unified 20 tribes and organized a simultaneous revolt. They drove the Spaniards from New Mexico.

Two years later, the Spaniards returned, and didn't leave.

In time, some Plains tribes moved west and also settled in New Mexico. The Plains tribes had to move west; people had used up buffalo.

The Rio Grande runs past Kuaua Pueblo. It's hardly grand anymore. The river begins in Colorado and flows through New Mexico and along the Texas/Mexico border. That's quite a long way south from the pueblo and it's hard to imagine how much water could be left downriver. For one thing, climate change has increased the incidence of drought. For another, eight dams and diversions upstream reduce the river's flow; eight more reduce it further downriver.

As I drove north from Kuaua, I approached Bandelier National Monument, a glorious area of forests, meadows, and historic archaeological sites. At one point the dense forest of Ponderosa pine, Douglass fir, and poplar trees opens into a brilliant green vista of gently rolling grass. It's an ancient caldera, breathtakingly beautiful.

A short drive later, I saw pine trees turning brown. The number of them grew, until eventually there were more dead and dying trees than living, healthy ones. And then I rounded the corner and saw a mountain of dead trees. I knew what had happened, but when I could I did some research just to be sure. The U.S. Forest Service confirmed it. Climate change has brought drought and beetle infestation to Bandelier. Pine beetles used to die in winter, but now that the climate is warmer, they survive winters as far north as Montana, and their population has exploded.

Coronado and his gang used up food, later people used up buffalo. We've used up the atmosphere's capacity to store carbon safely.

16.

In Cheyenne I saw an old friend who retired from the Air Force a few years ago. After he retired, he went to college and learned to be a high-school teacher. As he lives in Wyoming, he was trained in cultural sensitivity to Native Americans, in case he got a job teaching on a reservation. One of the things he learned was not to lavish praise on an individual kid for his achievements. The child has a place in a very large family, the tribe, and singling out one young member of the family for praise is inappropriate. I thought of this story when I saw the Crazy Horse memorial in South Dakota.

It's huge; Mt. Rushmore can fit in Crazy Horse's head. The memorial's late sculptor, Korczak Ziolkowski, began work on it at the request of a group of Indian chiefs in 1939. He married and had ten children and most of them carry on the project with his widow, Ruth. The project is much larger than the sculpture. It includes a museum featuring exhibits about many tribes of Native Americans and a nascent National Indian University.

In an orientation film, Ruth explains that her husband "believed in individual initiative and private enterprise; he didn't approve of going to the government with your hand open asking for a handout."

The Crazy Horse projects were conceived from the start as nonprofit ventures, funded by the public through their admissions and donations—"which are tax-deductible," Ruth emphasized—and product purchases. This freedom from government financial support was mentioned several times. The film features a Native American man who says, "The government never lived up to but one promise. They promised to take our land, and they took it." It also explains that Crazy Horse died at a young age, when he was stabbed in the back under a flag of truce.

Then the film shows two graduates of the summer educational program the university has so far managed to run. (It is not yet an accredited four-year institution.) One young Native man and one young Native woman stood at a podium and told their assembled audience that they had learned so much about themselves, and grown as individuals. That was when I thought about my friend's cultural sensitivity training.

Apparently the Ziolkowski family, while devoted to honoring Native Americans, also devote themselves to instilling in them beliefs in individual achievement and private enterprise that are antithetical to Native American culture.

The usual gift shop you see at memorials is here expanded into a gift emporium, room after room of products to read, watch, wear, give, and admire, and geared to a broad spectrum of tastes and ages. A graphic t-shirt and several other products combine the Crazy Horse monument with the American flag. Outside the shop is a sign featuring a biker who "came here for the freedom to ride and the freedom to do business."

At the time I visited, they had a display of original art by Charles Her Many Horses, a member of the Sicangu Lakota tribe, including a large acrylic and gold leaf painting on canvas titled *Abe's a Dick*. The painting, a riff on the Sistine Chapel ceiling fresco of God giving the spark of life to Adam, places Abraham Lincoln in God's place and a Native American man in Adam's. The man reaches toward Lincoln, his middle finger raised.

A card next to the painting explained, “President Lincoln ordered the largest mass execution in the history of this country—38 Dakotah men were hanged by his order in Mankato, Minnesota on December 26, 1862.”

Another card reads,

DISCLAIMER. The art and artifacts of the Indian Museum of North America® are displayed for educational purposes. Our philosophy is not to censor art if it has an educational value. We realize the sensitivity of this piece but believe this an opportunity for visitors to learn about the Dakota Wars of 1862 and President Lincoln.

It is signed, *Executive Management Team, Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation*.

In this context, I understood the conjunction of the American flag and the Crazy Horse monument on gift shop merchandise. The flag represents for the Executive Management Team of the Crazy Horse Memorial Foundation a pristine ideal, unmoored from history. For them, the flag is not a symbol of the nation as it is and has been—ruled by a government they clearly abhor—but of the nation as some people think it should be.

On its surface, the Crazy Horse memorial is a tribute to a nearly lost and noble culture and to a Native American hero. But in its telling of Native American history, its anti-government sentiment, and its paean to freedom, individual achievement, and private business, at its core the Crazy Horse enterprise exists to teach a libertarian lesson that could have been written by Ayn Rand.

# “You Won’t Have Our Park”<sup>1</sup>: Gezi Park Protests as Ritual in Istanbul, Turkey

BY SUMI COLLIGAN

The Gezi Park protests took place from late May until mid-June 2013 in a space located in central Istanbul, right off of Taksim Square. The square, a site of the now closed Ataturk Cultural Center, and a contested symbol of the Turkish Republic, served as a backdrop in which these protests unfolded. The initial protesters, who numbered around twenty, gathered with their tents to camp out in the park to protect the trees from being illegally razed (Farro and Demirhisar). The government intended to replace the park with a shopping mall to be modeled after an Ottoman military barracks that had once occupied that same spot (Farro and Demirhisar). The neighborhood, once a location of Greek and Armenian shops, had become residence for intellectuals, artists, and LGBT-identified individuals and establishments (Potuoglu-Cook; Pamuk; Sandikci). Even prior to the protest, an organization called Taksim Solidarity, formed in 2012, had been resisting the destruction of old buildings (including an old cinema) and the government’s mall plan (Farro and Demirhisar).

Within days, police had stormed the park and burned the protesters’ tents and belongings. Images of this police action circulated on Facebook

and Twitter and reports were disseminated by phone, word of mouth, or e-mail. The swiftness and excessiveness of the police response galvanized large numbers of diverse protesters to congregate in the park and barricade themselves against further police attacks.<sup>2</sup> Very quickly, the protest transformed from being about trees to being about coming to the aid of those protecting the trees (Greenhouse). For this reason, the protest could be characterized as “transenvironmentalist” (Damar 208). According to Voulvouli ( 862), transenvironmental movements are “movements that relate environmental crises to social crises.” As more protesters arrived at the site of conflict, Gezi took on the characteristic of a multi-issue resistance.

I became interested in these protests last summer, when, by chance, I sat in a café that abuts the park with a young woman in her early 30’s who regaled me with stories of her experiences as a Gezi Park protester. Until that moment, it looked like any other park, with people walking their dogs, couples flirting, or those who chose to linger, sitting on benches reading or taking a break from work or the fast pace of urban Istanbul, a city of about 14 million. She told me about the concoction protesters created to lessen the sting of tear-gas for participants and dogs, and about the lady in red, a young woman who stood poised in a beautiful red dress, never losing her dignity, as a TOMA (armored water-cannon truck) sprayed her with an intense rush of water mixed with chemicals. She also conveyed that the local CNN network had been told by Turkish authorities not to air the protests. They broadcast “The March of the Penguins” all day instead during the worst of the police brutality, making penguins a catalyst for humor during the protest itself (see Ozturkmen).<sup>3</sup> I became more curious about the protests and resolved to investigate them in greater depth.

As I began to read scholarly and media accounts of Gezi, one of the points that stood out for me was the way in which the protests brought together not only diverse but, in some cases, potentially antagonistic constituencies. I became intrigued with the potential the park itself offered for these constituents to both encounter and rethink differences. Although largely outside the scope of this essay, I also wondered whether these protesters’ epiphanies could sustain themselves beyond what turned out to be a time-limited revolt. Visits to Turkey in the fall of 2015 and the summer of 2016 enabled me to meet with former Gezi participants and pursue these queries further.<sup>4</sup>

### **The Park as a Liminal Space**

Liminality is a term coined by anthropologist Victor Turner. As a scholar of ritual, he was influenced by Van Gennep, who argued that the rituals are

characterized by three stages: the first being the stage of separation from one's previous status, identity, or role; the second being the period of ritual transition; and the third being the stage of reincorporation when ritual initiates are reintegrated into society with new world views, statuses, and/or identities. Liminality takes place during the transitional stage when the initiates are in an interstitial state, no longer what they were but not yet having acquired a new status. "The ritual subject...passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state" (Turner 94). As the subjects are "betwixt and between" (95), they do not fit neatly into pre-existing categories, opening themselves up to new possibilities. As their previous statuses no longer hold sway, the subjects become vulnerable, but their very vulnerability creates a space in which they can entertain novel ideas, information, or visions of a just social order.

I maintain that the concept of liminality is applicable to the experience of the protesters in Gezi Park. The barricades set the protesters off from the everyday world and the police assaults rendered previous identities less salient and relevant. The close proximity of diverse groups and the external threat forced people to interact. Survival dictated that protesters share resources, and the carnival-like atmosphere enabled participants to experience a break from everyday activities, temporal structures, and routine demands. These conditions provided a platform for potential transformation.

### **Liberal or Illiberal Democracy**

Turkey has exhibited autocratic state tendencies since its inception in 1923, founded under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, otherwise known as Atatürk. While for many years guided by a principle of state secularism (French-style *laïcité*) and a myth of a unified and singular Turkish people with a shared Turkish blood, this began to change in the 1980s, when the government began to require religious education in elementary schools and facilitated (perhaps unwittingly) the growth of a Muslim middle class who came of age in the 1990s (Altınay; Özyürek; White). The current president of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan traces his political roots to his membership in the Islamic Virtue Party (later banned) in the 1990s, as well as his success as mayor of Istanbul. He eventually gained a parliamentary majority through the AKP (Justice and Development Party) and emerged as the prime minister of Turkey in 2002 (White).

For a period, even progressives were hopeful. The army had its power curtailed and the discourse of human rights, of potential benefit to women and minorities, was being adopted more frequently by government agencies

due to Turkey's alleged enactment of accession procedures to gain European Union membership (Ozyegin; White). Further, shortly before Gezi, there was an opening for peace negotiations with the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party), an armed insurgency group, attempting to gain independence or autonomy for Turkish Kurdistan (White).

These shifts began to narrow as the AKP gained more parliamentary victories and the AKP's autocratic leanings began to reveal themselves. Religious Muslim women gained the right to wear Islamic dress in most public spaces but there was regression in other arenas. Erdogan began to promote a pro-natalist policy, providing financial incentives for a first, second, and third child. He also wanted to make it much harder for women to receive C-sections, and to ban abortion and the consumption of alcohol (Abbas and Yigit). Neo-liberal policies promoting consumerism, enlarging spaces for an international elite to play, invest, or spend money, encouraging the growth of financial centers, the destruction of green spaces, the displacement of poor and working-class urban residents, the privatization of services, and the proliferation of shopping malls, although starting in the 1980s with the imposition of structural-adjustment policies, peaked in the late 2000s under AKP leadership (Eken; Koca ).

### **Neo-Ottomanism**

The AKP has positioned itself as the guardian of Ottoman history. Its motivation has been to erase as well as trump the association of the Turkish Republic with the ideology and practices of Mustafa Kemal. The AKP wants to present Kemalist statehood as a brief and passing moment while it makes claims to represent and preserve a period of empire that was respected, expansive, and a beacon unto the Muslim world (Abbas and Yigit; Eken; White). Thus, its plans to build a shopping mall inspired by Ottoman architecture were ostensibly designed to symbolize the AKP's dedication to historical truth and architectural accuracy. By the same token, the AKP wanted to construct a mosque in Taksim Square next to the mall that was to replace Gezi Park. Again, the AKP argued that this construction project was honoring Ottoman sensibilities as Armenians, Greeks, and Jews had lived side by side Muslims during the Ottoman Era. Hence, it reasoned that since there was an Armenian church and a Greek Orthodox church in the neighborhood, a mosque would simply provide a balance of multicultural symbols and structures. Anthropologist Yael-Navarro Yashin describes Erdogan's strategy as one of "re-orienting collective memory" in order to enhance his own authority and power, whereas cultural studies scholar Bulent Eken (430) argues that the "memory is always the battleground of antagonistic desires." Eken concludes that as



people become further removed from their history, what they are left with is a sense of nostalgia that masks the complexity of contemporary realities.

The protesters, though, saw these neo-Ottoman expressions not as culturally authentic or as a commitment to tolerance and diversity but as another government strategy to disrupt spaces that resisted, by some measures, global capitalist dominance and Islamic control and surveillance. The efforts of groups like Taksim Solidarity to prevent further desecration of the neighborhood were intended to provide citizens greater local control of their surroundings as so-called urban renewal was recognized as a form of neo-colonialism, one in which both global and national political and economic forces and players converged and colluded to strip average citizens of agency over their quality of life and their future (Farro and Demirhisar).

### **Gezi Park: Its History and Its Trees**

The impetus to build Gezi Park came from Mustafa Kemal before he died in 1938, with the actual construction beginning soon afterward (Mert). What many people did not know was that in addition to being the site of an Ottoman military barracks, there had also been an Armenian cemetery on the north side of the park. Pangalati Armenian Cemetery was built in 1551, a gift from Suleiman the Magnificent (Greenhouse). In 1930, however, the cemetery was confiscated by the Turkish government under the grounds the Armenians lacked a proper land deed. While some tombstones were relocated to a different cemetery, others remained in the vicinity, only to be unearthed as part of the “urban renewal” project the AKP initiated (von Bieberstein and Tataryan). An Armenian with whom I spoke this summer told me that the stones from the Armenian church, once located within the cemetery grounds, had also been applied to the construction of the steps leading into the park itself. These Armenian remnants were to become an element of contestation during the Gezi Park protests.

Over time, the park became a site of concealed populations for other reasons as well. As the composition of the neighborhood changed, it evolved into a space where the marginalized met to engage in illicit sex. As Beyoglu was the primary location for gay bars, the park attracted gay men cruising for sexual partners. Moreover, the reasonably-priced housing in proximity to Gezi sheltered transgender residents (Sandikci). Although the demolition of some of the more affordable older buildings since the 1980s and the police raids on transgendered habitats in the 1990s drove some of the residents out (Sandikci), these “cleansing” operations were not entirely successful. Transgender individuals who remained would sometimes use the park to locate

clients for sex work (Zengin). Even before the Gezi protests, then, the park was a site of suppressed counter-memory, waiting perhaps to be exposed to broad daylight.

In the days before the Gezi protests were ignited, people were aware the trees would be felled and some had already been marked with a big red X in preparation for their removal (Ozturkmen). Several of my interviewees, including Leyla, recounted that environmentalists had named select trees after themselves and “put nice stuff on them” to remind onlookers that the trees had a legitimate claim to life. When protesters did arrive, beginning on May 27, 2013, setting up camp, “activists showed that one could always situate oneself in a more distant region of memory: nomads content to live in their tents under the trees, rejecting private property and the state” (Eken 430). Although Erdogan (in)famously attempted to dismiss the significance of the protests by asserting that they were just “about a few trees” (Ozturkmen 46), Mert (1) points out that, “A tree in a park represents not only the fragility of human existence and its relationship with nature in the midst of a soaring metropolis, but also a hiding place from state oppression.”<sup>5</sup> Erdogan’s derision was also challenged by the chanting of a widely used Gezi slogan, “Capitalism will cut down the tree of the shadow it cannot sell,” (as quoted in Gurcan and Peker 335). Hence, trees symbolized life’s precariousness and vulnerability; a space to escape surveillance and think independently; and targets for, as well as platforms to critique, global capitalism and its effects on constructed but familiar environments. More broadly, a doctor named Adem, a member of union of the Turkish Medical Association, and a Gezi activist,<sup>6</sup> reflected on the benefits of green spaces and one of the key impetuses for doctors’ participation:

We never degrade health as a treatment system and social identifiers of health. This is a subject we approach very sensitively as the Turkish Medical Association and we have been conducting many studies on this. In this frame, the destruction of nature, I mean the destruction of green spaces, construction of thermal power and facilities, nuclear plants...all of these, also food, GMO’s...they are all dangerous for social health.

Protecting the park, then, was also seen as important to the well-being of local residents.

### **The Gezi Protesters: General Characteristics**

When police attacked several days after the environmentalist encampment in Gezi, many others joined them, drawn by the injustice, out of curios-



*Photo courtesy of Nur Taran*

ity, or hosting diverse grievances. Apart from environmentalists, protesters were Alevis<sup>7</sup> (a non-Sunni Muslim group), anti-capitalist Muslims, anarchists, Armenians, feminists, leftists, LGBTQ individuals and groups, Kemalists,<sup>8</sup> Kurds, mothers of protesters,<sup>9</sup> soccer club fan members, and trade unionists. Approximately, 51% were women, the average age was 28, and only 22% had previous political party affiliations (Farro and Demirhisar).

While some had prior protest history—as socialists—labor activists or in opposition to the razing of Emek Cinema, a site that evoked fond childhood memories—many had been raised in a generation that had been sheltered from politics by their parents, who had memories of the repression, and in some cases, imprisonment and torture, associated with the 1980 military coup. Many young people had, in fact, grown up in an era in which such recollections had been actively obliterated (Abbas and Yigit). Historically, young people had played a role in the Turkish nationalist agenda as Atatürk believed that educated youth would guide the nation, becoming “the main instrument in this civilizational process, based on a localized version of Enlightenment

ideas” (Neyzi 411). In the 1980s and onward, youth came to be depicted as “apolitical consumers” (412), but, since the late 1990s especially, are no longer accepting these imposed expectations and images but are forging their own political interpretations, organizational structures, and or forms of political expression. Turkish anthropologist Leyla Neyli maintains that this generation is the first to question this modernist approach and is torn “between hopes of constructing a more participatory public sphere and disillusionment with the nation-state as an embodiment of modernity.” (412) Turkish sociologist Buket Turkmen contends that Gezi was a culminating moment for many young people, allowing them to transition from object to subject.

One general attribute of Gezi participants that has been debated is their social class standing. Some scholars have provided evidence that the protests, especially as they spread outside of the park to other parts of Istanbul, and other cities and provinces, represented a heterogeneous class population (Yoruk and Yuksel). Others have argued that what many protesters had in common was “decreased class capacities and life-chances, and increased precariousness, exploitation, and proletarianisation” (Gurcan and Peker 336). While some may have had the benefits of higher education, giving them cultural capital, many still found themselves working for the service sector, and/or in part-time, or in less than satisfying jobs (Farro and Demirhisar; Gurcan and Peker). While class insecurity, decline, and conflict offers a partial explanation for protester woes, however, it would undercut and erase the complexity of sentiments that brought people to the protests to analyze Gezi too singularly in class terms.

### **Protesters as Liminal Initiates**

The shape of the park and the barricades constructed by protestors to protect themselves from police attack forced people into close proximity who held ideological positions at odds with each other or who had never considered the other’s perspective or experience. “As with any modern park, its paths encourage pedestrians to drift, to wander in circles, and ultimately to decelerate” (Karakayali and Yaka 120). Participants often found themselves standing next to strangers, exchanging needed goods, supporting each other with emergency first aid, chanting in unison, practicing yoga, participating in colorful pageantry and innovating parody and satire to reflect their current situation.<sup>10</sup> Occupying the park became a means ‘for claiming the right to the city, understood as a right of urbanites to radically transform the processes that orchestrate the production and use of urban space’ (Kuymulu 274). The space became a site in which participants engaged in dialogue, challenging

each other's sense of truth and expanding their own sense of possibility. Prior identities, although not insignificant, offered people little security in the current circumstances, putting everyone on a more equal plane. While not without competition, conflict or incident (Abbas and Yigit), the atmosphere was largely one in which people listened rather than defamed, harassed, harmed, or destroyed. One interviewee explained:

These were the happiest times of my life. I had never felt part of the culture, as a woman, as an atheist. I was aware that we were marginalized in small groups. It was the first time I felt part of the culture even though everyone was different.

The Gezi Park protests are often described as spontaneous (Karakayali and Yaka), although leftists were among its first participants (Yoruk and Yuk-sel), and according to one of my interviewees, a socialist journalist named Ahmet Saymadi served as a catalyst for bringing people to the streets via a tweet he circulated regarding the police attack on the park. What was distinctive, though, was that the protests were not pre-organized, and the activities in the park were not hierarchically orchestrated and lacked the solemnity of previous leftist protests. Even leftists themselves experienced this protest in unique ways. For example, Can, an interviewee, who told me he became a socialist at the age of 15 when watching Gorki's novel *The Mother* performed on stage and who had been imprisoned right before the 1980 coup for possession of a firearm, disclosed that since he was 15 (he was 53 at the time of Gezi), he had been reading about revolution but it was all theory. Can elaborated on Gezi:

Nobody designed or wanted Gezi to happen at that moment. Gezi happened on its own...It was a gathering of people from various backgrounds. They went there with different emotions, but when Gezi was over, they were transformed totally. There were movements like Gezi, such as Occupy New York, but none of these movements had the same communist atmosphere as Gezi. But in the way the tents that were built in the park, we could sense the search for a communist, anarchist, ecological perspective. In this way it was also different and educational.

The anti-property bent of the protest could also be seen in the presence and actions of a group of young Armenians, Nor Zartonk. They created a facsimile of a gravestone marked "You Took Our Cemetery, You Won't Have our Park" (as quoted in von Bieberstein and Tataryan). The first part of the

slogan was meant to underscore an aspect unique to its group's existence but "you won't have our park" was meant to be more inclusive. The purpose of the mock cemetery was to educate viewers regarding the history of the area that preceded the construction of Gezi Park, pointing out that the temporality of the park itself, as well as evoking the Armenians who perished during the 1915 Armenian genocide during the transition from Ottoman Empire to Turkish nation. The theme of counter-memory is significant here as the Turkish government continues to deny that a genocide occurred, preferring to call the fallen victims of war (White). Von Bieberstein and Tatarayan characterized the performance of the Armenians as providing an opportunity to "think of dispossession outside the logic of possession," quoting from Butler and Athanasiou, because they had no desire to claim the space for themselves and their purpose in being in the park was to be in solidarity with others occupying it, marking the space as public.

Unlike previous protests, women participated in Gezi in unprecedented numbers. A feminist movement emerged in Turkey in the 1980s, challenging a state feminism that had been promoted at the founding of the Republic in which women were allowed to enter the educational and occupational spheres if they donned an asexual appearance and continued to attend to their domestic duties (Erturk; Ozyegin). One interviewee, Deniz, explained that in the feminist movements to which the 1980s gave birth, protests tended to be single issue and all female. The mixed gender nature of Gezi, along with the fact that many younger females, who had no former explicit identification with organized feminism, were attracted to this protest (Turkmen), made Gezi a novel experience for women.

Women's groups and women as individuals characterized Gezi as a relatively safe space, one in which they experienced little of the harassment that they endure on the streets in everyday life (Turkmen 2016). Some were there to protest the recent assault on their bodies and their right to make choices about them. Itir Erhart (302) reports:

Motherhood was one of the most frequently mentioned discourses in the park. The socialist, feminist collective hung up a giant sign at the entrance of the park reading "we don't owe children to men and to the state."

As one woman with whom I spoke who was part of this collective recounted, while reflecting on AKP policies pertaining to reproduction and birth, "As women, we couldn't breathe, we couldn't inhale." As the park facilitated en-

counters between groups and individuals, the issue of biopolitics was eventually taken up by other constituencies as well (Erhart). The women of this collective also composed and circulated a manifesto critiquing the use of sexist slogans to challenge Erdogan and his policies. Initially, typically used slogans “targeted Erdogan’s masculinity through swearwords questioning his penis size, heterosexuality, and impenetrability” (Aciksoz and Korkman). The women actively affected the behavior of men, holding an alternative swearing workshop, and encouraging men to use non-sexist chants and slogans.

My interviewee, a Kurdish Alevi woman named Deniz, explained that while some women had to go home at night to their families, they were very “visible, taking part in the process. Our women were there, sharing their woods, and being targets of police violence.” She reminisced:

As we sat under the trees day after day, we started to converse about the connections between urban areas and feminism. We started to think about what the city would look like from a feminist perspective – what would the parks look like, what would areas for kids look like, what would the streets look like. We talked about how Erdogan’s policies are taking profit from every living thing.

Her story coincided with the recollection of another feminist who recalled: “This is about the park, the trees, about being one with nature, and with those others who have been marginalized. We were all dying so we shouted ‘Living is resisting’” (as quoted in Mert 9).

Women who had never participated in organized protest also came to feel empowered by Gezi. Some contended that prior to Gezi they had been stifled by their personal upbringing while others believed belonging to organizations would infringe on their personal choices and viewpoints. For example, a woman named Ayla I met who had been physically threatened and abused by her father, a farmer and moneylender, and alleged that Turks were silenced by the existing political system, confided:

The more I took part in the protests, the more I realized that the more that I felt like I had a voice to shout. Maybe it is too personal but I realized that I have a voice and I can shout loud. In Gezi we saw some people we would never expect to see in a protest. Families brought their kids to the protests. How I read this is that everyone had something inside. It was an accumulation. It was a change.

The younger generation of women who feared giving up its individual



freedoms was there as well. After spending time in Gezi, one young woman (as quoted in Turkmen 127) concluded:

My individual freedom is not negotiable. I am very upset when one doesn't respect my space of personal freedom. I fight against him or her who doesn't respect it. But, I think that personal freedom and solidarity between individuals are complementary. First, it is necessary for me to create a space of personal freedom so that I can enter into solidarity with others. (my translation from the French).<sup>11</sup>

While the older generation of feminists worried that perhaps younger women were placing too much emphasis on individual freedoms, they realized in Gezi that individuals often engage in multiple struggles, and that this fragmentation of struggle is not inherently bad, and could foster new formations (Turkmen).

The “politics of visibility” was a key element for LGBTQ individuals as well. While homosexuality is not technically against the law in Turkey (Gorkemli), the Turkish nation-building project that ensued with the fall of the Ottoman Empire was decidedly masculinist, militarist, and heteronormative (Altınay; Gorkemli). The first LGBTQ organizations developed in the 1990s but members did not have that much of a public presence as they felt more comfortable meeting online. In 2001, one of these groups initiated a campaign, “Coming Out of the Internet” to encourage public gatherings (Gorkemli 72). Whereas there has been greater exposure to LGBTQ issues in the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Turkey, many citizens of Turkey had yet to have direct contact with LGBTQ individuals until Gezi, adding a heightened significance to Gezi for the LGBTQ participants.

Feminists and LGBTQ individuals made “natural” allies in critiquing a hypermasculinized language and state biopolitics that deems certain bodies “healthy” while excluding others as “abnormal” (Erkart). LGBTQ individuals “queered” the space by making spray painting “captured” bulldozers pink and trans sex workers tended to injured protesters in their nearby apartments, humanizing relationships where there had once been fear, hostility, or misunderstanding (Zengin). In this atmosphere of trust and kindness, non-LGBTQ groups and individuals responded by joining in chanting, “Faggots are here, where is Tayyip?” (Karakayali and Yaka 122).<sup>12</sup> Zelal, a trans woman with whom I spoke, conveyed that Gezi proved that it was possible for diverse groups to collaborate, contributing to a more politicized LGBTQ movement than in other parts of the world, and eschewing a narrowly focused identity politics.

Although some scholars have characterized Gezi as an assault on Islamist values promoted by the AKP, for a portion of participants, their gripe was

not about Islam per se but about its selective imposition by the state. Unlike the Kemalists of past generations, they were not opposed to Muslims wearing scarves in public places so long as they were not required. There were, in fact, Muslims at Gezi, who embraced a live and let live attitude, not unlike many of their secular counterparts. In addition to Muslim individuals, there was a group known as the anti-capitalist Muslims. In an interview I had with Ali Ishan Eliacik, a prolific writer, who has articulated the ideology of this group, he told me that in Gezi, he reassured women that it was not his goal to mandate Islamic dress. He also indicated that the LGBTQ tent and the tent of the anti-capitalist Muslims were side by side, and in the moment, they put aside their differences, praying together in recognition of their common humanity. Anti-capitalist Muslims “organized the Islamic-oriented ‘blessed night’ (*Kandil*) and ‘Friday prayer’ (*Cuma Direnisi*) protests” (Damar 213). In his Friday prayer sermons at Gezi, Eliacik declared, “People who have different beliefs and lifestyles are struggling together in unity and brotherhood where money is invalid, no one is hungry” (as quoted in Koca). Thus, the goal of the anti-capitalist Muslims was not “to Islamicize the nature of the Gezi protests” but to use “these Islamic forms of protest to foster unity and solidarity...” (Damar 213) among Gezi participants, regardless of background.

Not a fan of the AKP, Ihsan has become (in)famous for pronouncing, “I’d rather be a drunk than a backstabber.”<sup>13</sup> By making this statement, he is referencing Erdogan’s accusation that protesters escaping the police brought alcohol into mosques. Rather than being aligned with AKP-identified Islamists, who, from his vantage point, have allowed greed to distort their practice of Islam, he is underscoring that his group has more in common with those secularists who show greater empathy for marginalized groups and growing economic inequalities (Koca 2016). In fact, Damar (209) avers “the rigid boundary construction process aimed against the AKP simultaneously challenged the-three-decade-long-hegemony of the secular/Islamic divide by taking the form of politics of recognition.”

Among the most significant assembly to be present was the Kurds, an ethnic group that has been disparaged as primitive and backward and long been denied a distinctive identity and language rights (Grabolle-Celiker). Their presence caused discomfort to some (Abbas and Yigit) but was eye-opening to many others. Although some contended that there were few Kurds, a Kurdish man I interviewed named Foks contradicted this assertion, saying that they constituted about 15% of the participants, near proportionate to the numbers in the larger society. He expounded:

They were there because they are citizens of this country. They know the general authoritarian core that they have to fight, but on the other side, they were not sure that other people could understand their problems, their positions... There were some question marks because they have had some experiences, bad experiences for them, unlucky experiences. There is a saying in Turkish: "If you burn your mouth on milk, you will eat yogurt by blowing on it."

By invoking this idiom, Foks was suggesting that when people's suffering, historical memory, and sense of self have been erased and denied simultaneously, they approach such events as Gezi more tentatively, with greater caution.

Nonetheless, it was clear that for many non-Kurdish participants who encountered Kurdish people for the first time that they had been lied to by family members, educators, politicians, and the media. They could no longer simply classify Kurds as terrorists but developed an understanding of them as people with legitimate grievances. One woman I spoke with who had grown up in a well-to-do Kemalist family and who had been taught that Kurdish resistance was a threat to the unity of Turkish society and Atatürk's vision told me that Gezi had challenged her worldview. For Kurds, the revelation of non-Kurdish participants that they had been deceived, a deception of which Kurds were well aware, was perhaps one of the greatest gifts of Gezi.

Although not exhaustive of all the groups or individuals present at Gezi, the examples are intended to provide evidence of the liminal space the park provided for demonstrators to come face to face with each other's differences, to raise doubts about received truths, and to begin to construct an alternate space, one driven both by the necessities of survival within that space and by the creativity and humor of the participants threatened by external martial forces. Rituals are as much about innovation as tradition, allowing participants to see themselves and each other through fresh eyes. The park may not have offered citizens a pre-political space, one stripped fully of the political and societal context that shaped and contained their occupation of that space.<sup>14</sup> Nonetheless, Gezi did produce what many labelled the "Gezi Spirit (Gezi ruhu)," referring to "a set of emergent political affects, sequences, bonds and values and processes of recomposition" (Karakayali and Yaka 224). Chants such as "Hands off my tree/ street/ square/ home/ drink/ uterus/ sexual identity/ hair/ meal/ dress/ river/ number of kids/ bread/ home..." (as quoted in Mert 9) and "I am Sunni, I am Alevi, I am Christian, I am Kurdish" (as quoted in Karakayali and Yaka 223) exemplified the evolving understanding of the interconnected and overlapping nature of issues, plights, and

identities. On the dismantling of the Gezi protests, one of my interviewees, Prem, reflected that it was as if the government was telling the protesters: “You created a perfect life for yourself...but you need to live the life we created for you” but in response to this message she retorted: “We got rid of our prejudices and ideologies that weren’t serving us to create something better, a more useful ideological foundation.” In this sense, for her and many others, the protesters could be dispersed but the “Gezi Spirit” lives on.

### Looking Back on Gezi

One of the questions ritual theory poses relates to the power of ritual to alter participants, and by extension, social structures (DeMello). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz argues that rather than a return to structure, rituals allow participants to compare their ritual experiences and identities with their quotidian experiences and identities. This permits participants to gain clarity about what is missing or distorted in their everyday lives and gain insight into remedies to these absences and distortions. Participants carry the memory of the ritual experiences with them, as well as the way they felt during the ritual process. This memory allows them to resist stasis and to hold on to the possibility of an altered and improved reality, one that may not come to fruition immediately but should not be abandoned.

In the face of hegemonic memory, one that bolsters the power of the state and its neoliberal and increasing militaristic and religious underpinnings, the government has attempted to reestablish its dominant position by instilling fear in the populace and by playing non-Kurds off against Kurds. Academics and journalists are imprisoned for expressing disapproval of government policies (Erkmen), and police responses to expressions of resistance have become more organized and more “efficiently” harsh. In light of these conditions, some former Gezi participants have elected to leave Istanbul, either retreating to nature or working at ecological villages, acquiring the skills of organic farming and developing relationships with local villagers to explore modes of sustainable development.

Many initiatives evolved from Gezi, though. There were neighborhood forums, a few of which have been sustained over time, and deal largely with practical matters affecting local neighborhoods. Along with the forums, another type of cultural practice that emerged was “*iftar* protests” (Damar 214) or so called “earth tables” (Ozturkmen 61). Initiated by the anti-capitalist Muslims in the aftermath of Gezi as a response to the ostentatious *iftar* dinners enjoyed by the Muslim elite, these “tables” are set up on the street during Ramadan and people join together, religious and secular alike, for a meal

sharing food revelers have contributed to mark the breaking of the day's fast (Damar). Anyone can join in, and, indeed, one took place on Istiklal Street, Taksim's pedestrian walkway, the night I arrived in Istanbul this past June. On the political plane, there is a group called Vote and Beyond for which some of my interviewees volunteered. Participants of this group are watchdogs for elections in an attempt to reduce election fraud. Not least, a new party emerged from Gezi, the HDP (People's Democratic Party), a progressive Kurdish political party that has gained the support of many former Gezi participants, both Kurdish and non-Kurdish. In fact, these protesters helped HDP surpass the 10% voter threshold needed to enter the Turkish parliament in the June and November 2015 elections (*Hurriyet Daily News*, 1 November 2015). Moreover, one Turkish interviewee, Esen, told me that after the AKP rekindled the conflict with Kurds in July 2015, she visited Cizre, a community in the Kurdish southeast to act as a witness to the destruction of the village and the harm done to civilians. And, at least as of now, Gezi Park still stands.

The Gezi Park protests, thus, still serve as a counter memory, giving rise to novel social, cultural, and political formations. One former Gezi participant told me that she continues to visit the park "to remind myself of how courageous I was and to remember the hope we once had." Before I returned home from Istanbul this past June, I decided to take a walk through Gezi Park with my Turkish friend and shoot some photos. Only several days before, Erdogan had announced his plan to resume his initiative to replace Gezi with his dream of an Ottoman-style barracks (*Hurriyet Daily News*, 18 June 2016), an approach that social scientists Karakayali and Yaka (118) label "bulldozer neoliberalism." As we strolled along, I observed the tea and lottery sellers in the park eking out a living and wondered how such a displacement would affect their livelihood. As my friend stopped to snap a picture, a lottery ticket seller who was positioned in his wheelchair nearby, commented, "It's good to have a remembrance of this place as it won't be here much longer." My friend quipped, "We'll see!"

Former Gezi participants understand that the historical moment has shifted and that the strategies of resistance in Gezi might not be replicable. Yet the societal vision that Gezi helped shape still persists. When I posed a question regarding this vision to an interviewee named Ayla, she imagined:

Full of green, full of trees. No car sounds, no horns. No shouting. A place where money is not an issue all the time, where the location of one's residence is not an indication of wealth. A place where people are not valued for their wealth and property. An environment in

which people touch each other, love each other. No discrimination.  
A place where everyone is free.

### **Afterward**

Since the coup attempt that took place in Turkey on October 15, 2016, the claim can no longer be made that the younger generation of Turkish citizens has not experienced the horrors of a military takeover. If young people's innocence was not stripped of them in Gezi, it certainly has been now. On that fateful night, I received emails from several friends in Istanbul detailing their observations and fears. Although they had no desire for the coup to succeed, they found the nationalist displays of AKP supporters equally frightening. Turkish political scientist Define Kadioglu Polat argues that it was no mistake that Erdogan had his followers rally in Gezi Park since the foiled takeover given his obsession with Gezi and his inability to generate an anti-Gezi movement in the past. It remains to be seen, however, whether his current mobilizations of citizens can erase the association of Gezi with resistance to the status quo. As I conclude this paper in the aftermath of the coup, a massive purge is taking place, not simply in the military, but in many public and private institutions and organizations. While the outcome of this process is not clear, ongoing repression may yet serve as a catalyst for the Gezi resistance to rise again.

### **Acknowledgements**

This essay would not have been possible without the assistance of Nur Taran to whom I am greatly indebted. She regaled me with stories of Gezi, used her networks to help me locate potential interviewees, translated conversations when necessary, and transcribed interviews into English. Her intelligence, skills, and friendship made this work not only doable but fun.

## Works Cited

- Abbas, Tahir and Yigit, Ismail Hakki. "Scenes from Gezi Park: Localisation, Nationalism and Globalization in Turkey." *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, Action*. 19:1. 2015. 61-76. doi: 10.1080./13604813.2014.969070
- Aciksoz, Salih. "Medical Humanitarianism Under Atmospheric Violence: Health Professionals in the 2013 Gezi Protests." *Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry* 40:2. (June) 2016. 198-222.
- Aciksoz, Salih Can and Zeynep Korkman. "Masculinized Power, Queer Resistance." *Fieldsights Hotspots*. *Cultural Anthropology* online, 31, October 2013. www.cultanth.org. Web. 15 October, 2015.
- Damar, Erdem. "Radicalization of Politics and Production of New Alternatives: Rethinking the Secular/Islamic Divide After the Gezi Park Protests in Turkey." *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*. 24:2. 2016. 207-222. doi: 10.1080/14782804.2016.1167677.
- DeMello, Margo. *Bodies of Inscription: A Cultural History of the Modern Tattoo Community*. Durham and London: Duke UP. 2000. Print.
- Eken, Bulent. "The Politics of the Gezi Resistance: Against Memory and Identity." *The South Atlantic Quarterly*. 113:2 (Spring) 2014. 427-436.
- Erhart, Itir. "Biopolitics & the Gezi Park Protests." *Proceedings of the 2013 International Conference on the Modern Development of Humanities and the Social Sciences (MDHSS 2013)*. Atlantic Press, doi. 10. 2013. 301-303.
- Erkmen, T. Deniz. "Turkey's Cautionary Tale," 4 July 2016. www.opendemocracy.net. Web. 24 July 2016.
- Erturk, Yakin. "Turkey's Modern Paradoxes: Identity Politics, Women's Agency, and Universal Rights." *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights*. Eds. Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp. New York: New York UP, 2006. 79- 108. Print.
- Farro, Antimo and Deniz Gunce Demirhisar. "The Gezi Park Movement: A Turkish Experience of the Twenty-first-century Collective Movements." *International Review of Sociology*. 24:1. 2014. 179-189.
- Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*. New York: Basic Books. 1973. Print.
- Greenhouse, Emily. "The Armenian Past of Taksim Square." *The New Yorker* online, 28 June 2013. www.newyorker.com, Web. 7 July 2016.
- Gorkemli, Serkan. "'Coming Out of the Internet': Lesbian and Gay Activism and the Internet as a 'Digital Closet' in Turkey." *JMEWS: Journal of*

- Middle East Women's Studies* 8.3. (2012): 63+. *Academic One File*. Web. 18 Aug. 2015.
- Grabolle-Celiker, Anna. *Kurdish Life in Contemporary Turkey*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus. 2013. Print.
- Gurcan, Efe Can and Efe Peker. "A Class Analytic Approach to the Gezi Park Events: Challenging the 'Middle Class' Myth." *Capital and Class* 39:2. 2015. 321+. *Business Insights: Essentials*. Web. 10 July 2016.
- Hurriet Daily News*. "Turkey's AKP Makes Strong Comeback, Wins Enough Seats for Single- Party Rule." *Hurriet Daily News*. 1 November 2015. www.hurrietdailynews.com. Web. 27 July 2016.
- Hurriet Daily News*. "Erdogan Vows to 'Rebuild' Ottoman Military Barracks in Istanbul's Gezi Park." *Hurriet Daily News*, 18 June 2016. www.hurrietdailynews.com. Web. 24 July 2016.
- Karakayali, Serhat and Ozge Yaka. "The Spirit of Gezi: The Recomposition of Political Subjectivities in Gezi." *New Formations* 83 (2014): 117+. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 7 Dec. 2015.
- Koca, Bayram. "The Emergence of Anti-capitalist Muslims: 'God, Bread, and Freedom'" Paper Presented at "Non-Capitalist Islam – Yesterday's Ideology or New Horizons Workshop," Germany, 15-17 February 2016.
- Kuymulu, Mehmet Baris. "Reclaiming the Right to the City: Reflections on the Urban Uprisings In Turkey." *City: Analysis of Urban Trends, Culture, Theory, Policy, and Action*. 17:3. 2013. 274-278. doi. 10.1080.1360481.2013.815450.
- Mert, Aysem. "The Trees in Gezi Park: Environmental Policy as the Focus of Democratic Protest." *Journal of Environmental Policy and Planning*. 2016. doi: 10.1080/1523908X. 2016.1202106. Web. 10 July 2016.
- Navarro-Yashin, Yael. "Breaking Memory, Spoiled Memorization: The Taksim Protests in Istanbul." *Fieldsights – Hotspots, Cultural Anthropology* online, 31 October 2013. www.cultanth.org. Web. 15 October 2015.
- Neyzi, Leila. "Object or Subject? The Paradox of 'Youth' in Turkey." *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 33 (2001). 411-432.
- Ozturkmen, Arzu. "The Park, the Penguin, and the Gas: Performance in Progress in Gezi Park." *TDR: The Drama Review* 58:3 (Fall) 2014. 39-67.
- Ozyegin, Gul. *New Desires, New Selves: Sex, Love, and Piety among Turkish Youth*. New York: New York UP, 2015. Print.
- Ozyurek, Esra. *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics*



- in Modern Turkey*. Durham and London: Duke UP. 2006. Print.
- Pamuk, Orhan. *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. New York: Vintage Books. 2004. Print.
- Polat, Define Kadioglu. "Did Erdogan Finally Get His Gezi?" 26 July 2016. [www.opendemocracy.net](http://www.opendemocracy.net), Web. 7 August 2016.
- Potuoglu-Cook, Oyku. "Beyond the Glitter: Belly Dance and Neoliberal Gentrification in Istanbul. *Cultural Anthropology* 21:4. 2006. 633-660.
- Sandikci, Ozlem. "Strolling Through Istanbul's Beyoglu: In-Between Difference and Containment." *Space and Culture* 20:10. 2013. 1-14.
- Turkmen, Buket. "L'individualisme Solidariste des Actrices de Gezi." *Agora Debats/Jeunesses* 73:2. 2016. 121-133.
- Turner, Victor. 1969. *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*. Chicago. Aldine Publishing. 1969. Print.
- Von Bieberstein, Alice and Nora Tataryan. "The What of Occupation: 'You Took Our Cemetery, You Won't Take Our Park.'" *Fieldsights – Hotspots, Cultural Anthropology* online, 31 October, 2013. [www.cultanth.org](http://www.cultanth.org). Web. 15 October 2015.
- Voulvouli, Aimilia. "Transenvironmental Protest: The Arnavutkoy Anti-bridge Campaign." *Environmental Politics* 20:6. 2011. 861-878.
- Walton, Jeremy. "Confessional Pluralism and the Civil Society Effect: Liberal Mediations of Islam and Secularism in Contemporary Turkey." *American Ethnologist* 40:1. (February) 2013. 182-200.
- Yoruk, Erdem and Murat Yuksel. "Class and Politics in Turkey's Gezi Protests." *New Left Review* 89. (October) 2014. 103-123.
- White, Jenny. *Muslim Nationalism and the New Turks*. Princeon, NJ: Princeton UP, 2013. Print.
- Zengin, Asli. "What is Queer about Gezi?" *Fieldsights – Hotspots, Cultural Anthropology* Online, 31 October 2013. [www.cultanth.org](http://www.cultanth.org). Web. 15 October 2015.

## Endnotes

- 1 "You took our cemetery, you won't have our park" was a chant and inscription used by Armenians at Gezi (von Bieberstein and Tataryan ).
- 2 Quickly, the demonstrations spread out to other parts of Istanbul, and eventually to urban centers in 79 out of Turkey's 81 provinces (Gurcan and Peker).

- 3 Penguins were featured in cartoons and posters wearing gas masks and being gassed, for example (Ozturkmen).
- 4 I interviewed forty-four people during my two visits in Fall 2015 and June 2016. The voices I have represented here are but a portion of the people I interviewed as the tape transcriptions are still in process. Interviewees have been given pseudonyms, sometimes ones of their own choosing. The only people who are legally named are my friend and translator, Nur Taran (as she elected to be named), and Ali Ihsan Eliacik, as he is a public figure, tweeter, and writer. As befitting an anthropologist, I have also included my own observations and experiences as well as information gleaned from casual conversations.
- 5 Mert (1) quotes the poem of a well-known leftist Turkish writer, Nazim Hikmet, that was recited often in Gezi:  
  
My leaves are a hundred thousand hands  
I touch you, I touch Istanbul, with all hundred thousand  
I watch you, I watch Istanbul, with a hundred thousand eyes  
My leaves beat like a hundred thousand hearts  
I'm a walnut tree in Gulhane Park  
Neither are you aware of this, nor are the police.
- 6 Many health professionals participated in Gezi to provide medical aid, and sometimes as trade unionists and leftists. The emergency care given to protesters was later criminalized as the government contended that their licenses were not valid outside of hospitals and clinics.
- 7 While many argue that Alevis are of Central Asian shamanic origin, some Alevis find this claim a matter of debate (Walton). Many Alevis have aligned themselves with leftist groups in Turkey as they have been marginalized by the Sunni majority (White).
- 8 Kemalists are those who have remained committed to the secularist, modernist project of Turkey's founder, Mustafa Kemal. As they no longer represent the political majority, they now see themselves as a beleaguered group (Ozyurek).
- 9 On June 13<sup>th</sup>, politicians suggested that mothers collect their children; instead they created a human chain around the park to protect their children (Ozturkmen). Some of my interviewees told me that the mothers also prepared food to share with protesters.

- 10 Karakayali and Yaka (125) assert that rather than diminishing the impact of political action, humor turned inward and outward offers “tools to challenge power relations,” and in the Gezi context, allowed participants to think critically about their plight and emerge with new understandings.
- 11 Ma liberté individuelle n'est pas negociable. Je suis tres derangee quand on ne respecte pas ma zone de liberte personnelle. Je combats contre celui ou celle qui ne le respecte pas. Mais, je pense que la liberte personnelle et la solidarite entre les individus sont complementaires. D'abord, il faut que je me cree une zone de liberte individuelle pur que je puisse entrer en solidarite avec les autres (as quoted in Turkmen 127).
- 12 The 2013 Gay Pride Parade that took place in Istanbul later that June drew larger crowds than in previous years because many Gezi participants showed up to demonstrate their solidarity with the revelers. One parader cross-dressed as a tree in reference to Gezi (Ozturkmen; Zengin).
- 13 Ali Ihsan Eliacik shared this quote with me in an interview I had with him on June 8, 2016.
- 14 Walton (183) theorizes, “Civil society is a ground on which both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic political discourses intersect, challenge, and animate each other.”

# PROTEST

DAVID GIANNINI

Haven't we drowned on this street before?  
Remember the hoses. First, we were  
knocked down, kicked, then carried away  
with one another, leaves in a sudden  
downpour moving swiftly into the nearest  
gutter, and then the awful falling behind  
bars. Leaf by leaf, we found ourselves stuck  
together, oak with maple with ash. Once  
the storm passed, the bloody street dried  
under sun. Some of us looked out through  
the bars and could make out a few branches  
to the left and right, where some of our  
comrades still hung. Not one of them or  
any of us are leaves. Yes, we are.

## CORD / CAIRNS

DAVID GIANNINI

1.

I have stacked cairns of wood since we moved here, a way of honoring the roundness of trees with their own logs, plus there is a sense of the age-old power of a circle, in this case brought high, as any good Druid would do, a difference being these cairns unlike their ancestors in stone 'live' only a season. The cairns also save space since more cordwood can be 'stored' round and upright within a smaller area. The man who delivers our stove-wood knows what I mean when I order cairns to be brought. A cairn is a cord rethought.

2.

In the bright afternoon I stacked split wood into the shape of a giant skeleton key placed on the open floor of pine needles.

After finishing that chore I saw a sunbeam crossing cherry beech and ash lift and turn the stack until a door opened in air, and on the other side a lithe presence, having waited long months in the cold and having felt everything empty itself and be cut off and divided, dipped itself in light's applause of it being green and of insistent being.

3.

So little in the woods so far: moss & grasses all.  
Poetry making purpose stand up taller.

4.

The ragged right hand of the work glove left out  
on the woodpile begins to pulsate at the wrist as if  
a chipmunk's entered where none and no one is.

How to explain this pulse of an emptiness in  
the sun, the fingers as yet unmoving and the work  
undone?

No one knows the whole life of things, of wood  
once living or this glove in the shape of a hand.

Memory is both organic and inanimate and can  
show itself banged up and tattered by what first  
motioned it into shape. So it is that part of what-  
ever you are is sometimes left out, outside. The wrist  
is history.

# Post Hoc

BY GEROL PETRUZELLA

In other words, she thought, choosing gets you nowhere.

Without breaking into it, she ground her teeth in frustration, happiness leaking out of her stance like a sieve. Climb. Climb. Snap. It shouldn't be this hard. Or at least the parts should hang together better, like one of those bar puzzles whose chrome loops and protrusions you can never quite tease apart.

Tied in knots, she was. At the beginning of all this, the draw was the organic beauty of it: parts growing from parts, a natural progression. Flow. Flowers. Bees and happiness and fluttery breezes. The nautilus shell, right? Follow the script, while writing the script. One's vision of the path delimiting one unique location (not eight, god help us) from which to survey things. Give me a place to stand, and a fulcrum: she saw that. The problem was not that branches diverge, but that they converge again later. Branches ought not to do that, hence her current predicament. Swatting away the persistent whine of innumerable tiny midges, climbing laboriously up this goddamned twisted trunk, looking to make straight the path, so to speak. Diamonds, she thought, are most definitely not my best friend.

Snap. How many in recent memory had tried this? And for what personal purposes? What drives me? Caught up in a loop of my own making. Growth expands into a tangle, syntax lost, boundaries unclear. Where to cut, she wondered. Simplicity still flowed in the heartwood, she had no doubt. Cut away the confusion (which is itself an inscrutable simplicity, really) and find it again. Climb. Is that it? Do I cut away the growth to recover where I started? But no, no, the opposite: binding, not cutting, is how to map my language to theirs, to connect. I must tie it all together. Climb. Climb. Tie. Snap.

Choice? Illusion. Or simply a multiplicity masquerading as something else. Parmenides, eat your heart out. When you've laid out the paths, the branches, yourself, can you really blame someone for thinking that way? How many times will it repeat, and repeat, and repeat? We have to put some limit on this, she thought. I do. Inference drives innovation: let's see what may happen, not what will. But the swampy, fetid undergrowth – decomposing muck – we're trying to escape all that, she thought. Climb. Climb. Climb.

What of it? There are always those on whom we build. Necessarily. There must be a fulcrum, it's the nature of things. A counterweight. Simple physics. No amount of wishful thinking changes that. Kick the ladder away after you've climbed high enough. Occasionally you'll take a path that reminds you of those necessary beginnings (really, why so many loops?). I can do better, she thought. Bracket the counterweight, deal with it later. Just get the path right, and the rest will resolve.

Execute.



```

    }
}

break;

alert("\nsorry! Better Luck NEXT TIME");

if ( ! (isWord == words) && i == 15) {

    }

index = words.indexOf(userGuess, index + 1);
dashes[index] = letterGuess[0];
while(index > -1) {

    var letters = words.split("");
    words = words[word];

    var word = Math.floor(Math.random()*10);

    while(playAgain == 'y') {

        // starting iterative process loop function
        words[0] = ("synthesis");

        var x = 0;

        var index = -1;
        var words = "";
        var words = [];
        // initializing
        function system() {

            break;

            alert("You WON!");
            if(isWord == words) {
                document.getElementById('word').innerHTML = isWord;
                var isWord = dashes.join(' ');
            }

            userGuess = prompt("choose NOW");
            alert("Invalid input!\nTRY AGAIN")
            while( ! (checkText(userGuess))) {

                }

            }

            if(userGuess == "quit"

            }
        }
    }
}

```

# The Language of Trees

BY HOLLY WREN SPAULDING

In his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More Than Human World*, the ecological philosopher David Abram suggests that by acknowledging links “between the inner, psychological world and the perceptual terrain that surrounds us” we free our psyche from its roots in what is strictly human and have the opportunity to perceive how “intelligence is no longer ours but is a property of the earth”. This way of experiencing the world around me, of understanding myself within it, and of acknowledging other forms of knowing, describes what I’ve felt, whether consciously or not, for most of my life. Abram writes, “Indeed each terrain, each bioregion, seems to have its own particular intelligence, its unique vernacular of soil and leaf and sky.”

I think this is true, but more importantly, I feel it. I moved to western Massachusetts from northern Michigan a couple of years ago and I’m still learning this place and how it’s different, as well the names of things I see and hear every day. As I write this, there’s a cacophony of robins, starlings, mourning doves, and several other birds I don’t recognize in the high branches of a

mature oak across the yard, and in the maples and hemlocks that surround it. According to my field guide, New England has 16 different kinds of oak. Which ones would I know?

Abrams causes me to consider my body's relationship to my new home ground. Like a lot of people, I sit at a desk for most of the day, cogitating and typing. I don't really use my body the way my ancestors did, or even as my father does, who has worked for fifty years with his, mostly outdoors, where he's at home in his environment, able to identify birds, trees, plants, and shifts in the wind.

A poet must be awake to the sensual, physical world; I know this, and a poem by Lorine Niedecker serves as one of my reminders of this truth:

For best work  
you ought to put forth  
    some effort  
        to stand  
in north woods  
among birch

Just this week, halfway into May, most of the large trees in our yard finally unfurled their leaves. Now, even the air seems tinted green. I have watched and waited for this—not wanting to miss any of the subtle shifts that accompany our transition to true spring.

•   •   •

Melanie Mowinski and I first met in her letterpress printing studio two years ago, where I'd gone to learn how to print some of my poem fragments as letterpress broadsides. As artists, we're both exploring our relationship to trees, as well as the bigger idea that forests are fundamental to the health and well-being of our planet.

Since 2005, Melanie has made handmade paper "empowerment words" using words like 'honor', 'hope', 'give', and 'joy', wrapping them around trees as a way of observing Earth Day and Arbor Day, among other things. People respond to her words with visible delight when they find them in public parks and along city streets. As a poet interested in what can be expressed in a few well chosen words, I saw an opportunity and asked her to collaborate with me.

Early Autumn, 2015. Melanie and I stand over black plastic tubs in her

art studio, sleeves up, swirling abaca pulp in water to make handmade paper which we'll form into words, and in turn arrange into a short poem. Once shaped and dried, each word will stand about eight inches tall, and will be legible from a distance of twenty feet or more. This first poem will appear along a wooded path in the Berkshires of Massachusetts.

Look / Look / the / trees / are / making / beauty / we / can / breathe.

Our shared vision is to install these poems so that the words function as a kind of gentle interruption in the visual landscape, nudging viewers to pay attention to some of the many functions of trees—emotional, spiritual, aesthetic, utilitarian—and loosen, as Abrams says, their “psyche from its confinement within a strictly human sphere.” This kind of art invites reflection, feelings, and even conversation—with ourselves and with each other—in a setting where the trees have standing and thereby join and inform the exchange. We’ve called our ongoing project *Here, Stands*.

• • •

Many years ago I read about the forest monks of Southeast Asia who ordain trees by wrapping them in orange monk’s robes, subsequently protecting many of Thailand’s trees from industrial logging. Images of these “monk trees” have always moved me with their simple beauty, while the action of ritually draping the trees reflects imagination and hope. Inspired by this deeply poetic form of resistance, I have wanted to find my own way to express this feeling that trees are sacred.

The monk trees also brought to mind some of the wrapped artworks of Cristo and Jeanne-Claude, including *The Gates*, a work for New York City’s Central Park involving 7500 gates draped with flowing saffron fabric. Three friends and I walked through part of *The Gates* in February 2005, noticing the warm glow the fabric cast over stark winter paths, and recalling some of my impressions of temple grounds in Japan. The whole experience slowed us down, and gentled our conversation, and I remember feeling that we’d entered a calmer, more reverential atmosphere in the middle of a metropolis. Art made that possible.

In her essay, “The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand,” Professor Susan M. Darlington writes, “A major aim of Buddhism is to relieve suffering, the root causes of which are greed, igno-

rance, and hatred. The monks see the destruction of the forests, pollution of the air and water, and other environmental problems as ultimately caused by people acting through these evils, motivated by economic gain and the material benefits of development, industrialization, and consumerism. As monks, they believe it is their duty to take action against these evils.” Likewise, as a poet and a Buddhist myself, the *Here, Stands* collaboration with Melanie fulfills more than an artistic vision. It helps me feel that I am also doing the necessary spiritual work of upholding, through action, some of the values I hold most dear.

Our growing disassociation from the natural world and our lack of appreciation for the role it plays in sustaining all life, are not only ecological challenges, but spiritual impassés that must be matched with contemplation and action. Trees cool our atmosphere, clean our air, filter our water, and hold our soil in place. Trees provide respite from the ugliness and clamor of urbanization. Can poems in trees provoke others to become aware of any of these benefits? Can they bring awareness to the ways forests nourish our inner life or quiet the mind?

• • •

I grew up on an off-the grid homestead ten miles from any town, in an intentional community comprised of other families who’d left cities to move “Back to the Land”. Named Heartwood, after the interior part of the tree, it was a social experiment inspired by the idea that we could live durably on the land, mostly independent of the cash economy, making do with what we could grow, or make, or find. Everyone who lived there was an artist or craft-person or maker of some kind.

As a girl I learned many of the names of trees from my father, a carpenter, who works with wood every day. He also taught me to identify their grain, so that even without bark or leaves or flowers as clues, I know maple, walnut, cherry, oak, cedar, birch, and pine. Sometimes I know basswood, too, with its bright white color and a faintly fuzzy surface when rough sawn, but I wouldn’t know it in its natural state.

Along with poetry and Buddhism, it was my father who played a central role in passing on to me the belief that all living things have a right to exist, that they are sacred and worthy of respect, even reverence. A hand-painted plaque hangs near the entrance to my parents’ home with one of his mantras: Earth is Heaven, Nature is God. If this is it—our land of true goodness and

reward—as I believe it is, then caring for our planet is not just a social responsibility, but a mandate. This basic respect for where I live is one of the earliest spiritual teachings I received as a child.

I spent most of my youth playing outside, usually in the woods, often climbing trees and shimmying up and down saplings. I also remember gathering branches and plants for the construction of forts, saying a quick word of gratitude if I took something alive—branch or leaf—to embellish my constructions. In my memory, I’m eight or nine years old, whispering “Thank you hemlock,” and “Thank you beech.” I also apologized for injury or damage I might have done. Eventually, with the exception of wildflowers, I decided to use only what I found on the ground.

I don’t often talk about this time in my life because it’s hard to explain what it’s like to live in a more or less 19<sup>th</sup> century way—our light came from oil lamps, our heat from firewood, our food from an extensive organic garden—to people who only know about life with central air and quick trips to the supermarket. But one of the clearest images of that time in my young life includes a giant willow where I spent many of my solitary afternoons, singing made-up songs to myself, and listening to the life of the swamp that surrounded us.

The spirit of those early experiences, and the language of trees I learned through them, have made their way into my poetry for years. *Catkin, thicket, bract, deciduous, grove, anther, burl, bough*. These words help make my world known to me, and point to what I don’t yet know but want to understand, like the combination of pressures and temperature that cause sweet sap to flow in sugar maples in early spring. More than a science lesson, more than a metaphor, my family depended on this natural sweetener, which we collected in buckets and boiled into syrup during all the years of my childhood. Even the youngest among us learned early on how important it was for the days to warm up, and the nights to cool down, so that the sap would flow and we could stock the root cellar with what we would need for the rest of the year.

• • •

My childhood made me more than a poet and someone who cherishes nature. In the early aughts, I hosted a group of environmental activists from the West Coast in my home. They’d given a workshop on non-violent direct action where they’d taught a group of us anti-globalization activists how to use lockboxes made with PVC piping and chains, to conduct a protest blockade.

They were experienced with using these tactics to interdict logging operations in old growth forests in California and Oregon, while I belonged to a group organizing against the privatization of Great Lakes groundwater. This form of resistance and spectacle appealed to my need to put my own body on the line for things I care about. I wanted to create situations that would force the media, and therefore the public, to take notice of threats to the natural world.

Driving home after the workshop, we passed row after row of uniform red pine, also known as plantation pine. One of my new friends, John, commented that these second-growth forests were very young and lacking in majesty compared to the natural Douglas fir and giant redwoods and sequoia he knew from his involvement in tree-sits out West. We talked about how the red pines' usefulness as timber and pulpwood failed to compensate for the fact that they make for poor habitat and have none of the diversity, richness, or resilience of a real forest. He made me further appreciate the vast extent to which our landscape is shaped by human values and use, and the costs of that.

Now when I encounter places where wildness still exists, I see and hear them woven through with the sounds and intelligences of myriad life forms other than our own. I see such places as part of a world whose sentience I do not fully understand. I am part of it, but where I fail to comprehend it fully, it fully and deeply comprehends me. It's a world far greater and more beautiful, more mysterious and alien, than the one we humans think we know.

• • •

Recently I came across a story about Melbourne, Australia, where each tree in the city has an identification number and associated email address so that citizens can report problems like storm damaged limbs or disease. Residents of Melbourne have bigger imaginations than that, however, and some of the trees are now receiving questions, confessions, and even love letters. *The Atlantic* reprinted several of these correspondences; here's one addressed to an elm, a species that thrives in many parks and gardens throughout Australia, but which was decimated by Dutch Elm disease in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in much of the Northern Hemisphere:

"My dearest Ulmus, As I was leaving St. Mary's College today I was struck, not by a branch, but by your radiant beauty. You must get these messages all the time. You're such an attractive tree."

Elms are known for their capacious canopy and grand, outreaching limbs. This note makes me want to find one and give it a closer look, but of course they're now rare in this part of the world. I will have to content myself with writing poems for trees, which are my love letters.

• • •

It's spring, finally, many months since I began making notes for this essay. As magnolias flaunt their petals, and cherries throw their pink fiestas, I notice something emerging in me as well. As the natural world turns on, I feel a similar awakening. In part, I'm describing what it feels like to be renewed in body and spirit by what's happening in the environment, which is the closest thing I have to a church. It's also about the renewal brought by beauty. And all the little poems, the installations, the songs I sang as a child in a willow—these are my praise songs and devotions.

The late poet, Jack Gilbert wrote “We are given the trees so we can know what God looks like.” An encounter with a Giant Redwood or a 3,640 year old Bristlecone Pine makes the spiritual aspects of trees evident, but even a tender sapling will do if truly looking, asking, wondering and noticing. We are given groves, forests, and all else that flourishes in such habitats, that we may finally realize that Creation holds far more within it than resources to be exploited.

• • •

On Arbor Day this year, Melanie took *Here, Stands* to Nebraska, and installed a new poem along a path at Arbor Day Farm, not far from Kimmel Harding Nelson Center for the Arts, where she was an artist in residence.

Blue shadows / of trees / lay down / their cool / invitations

To read this poem, you walk along a meandering path, and it might take you a full minute to see and read the words in full. You look up. You await the next word, perhaps wondering what you're seeing and how it got there. The words look a little bit like the new snow that sticks to bark after a storm, and yet feels unexpected. By the end of summer, the ephemeral poem will have disintegrated into the natural landscape.

• • •

A light breeze just passed through the branches of the crabapple I look at each day while I work at my desk. A mere breath, it caused a handful of pale petals to fall to the ground. Their brief season alerts me to the passage of time, and



the persistence of beauty, even in a damaged landscape. And to the power of small things to enchant and sustain me, as this tree does, every day, even in winter.

## Works Cited

- Abrams, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More Than Human World*. New York: Vintage, 1997. Print.
- Darlington, Susan M. "The Ordination of a Tree: The Buddhist Ecology Movement in Thailand." *Ethnology*, 37.1 (Winter, 1998):1-15. Web.
- Gilbert, Jack. *Refusing Heaven*. New York: Knopf, 2007. Print.
- LaFrance, Adrienne. "When You Give a Tree An Email Address." *The Atlantic*. July 10, 2015. Web.
- Niedecker, Lorine. *Collected Works*. Ed. Jenny Penberthy. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Print.

# Maple

CYNTHIA READ GARDNER

Where the maple stood, four storeys high,  
its bark mottled with mold,  
its recesses dens for dandelions and decay,  
limbs wired between storms,  
branches splintered and spoked:  
a hollow two yards wide  
where the men shaved the trunk to oblivion,  
and took a hundred years of shade,  
the silhouette of leaves at night  
from my bedroom window.

Air fills in where it left  
A screen as big as the sky.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Karen Cardozo** is assistant professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at MCLA, where she coordinates programs in Leadership and Women's Studies. She was rooted in the liberal arts as an English major at Haverford College before completing a Masters in Higher Education Administration from Harvard University and a PhD in literary and American Studies from UMass Amherst. She has published on contemplative, ethnic, gender, genre, labor, literary, trauma and science studies in various scholarly collections and such journals as *American Studies*, *Critical Sociology*, *Journal of Asian American Studies*, *Modern Language Studies*, *Pedagogy*, and the *William Carlos Williams Review*. An experienced career counselor, she is working on a book about authentic life design for the 21st century.

**Nancy Ciccone** chairs the English department at the University of Colorado, Denver. Trained as a comparatist, she specializes in Western classical and medieval literatures. She is trying to transform her backyard into a forest; aspen and pine, rather than oak, seem to like the climate best.

**Sumi Colligan** is an anthropology professor at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Her primary areas of interest include cultures of resistance and protest, and the struggles of disenfranchised populations in relation to national cultures and globalizing forces. She has an abiding fascination with the Middle East, focusing on Israel, and more recently, on Turkey. In 2014,

Dr. Colligan participated in a Council on International Educational Exchange faculty development seminar on women's issues in the Middle East held in Amman, Jordan, and in 2015, completed a CIEE seminar on Syrian refugees that took place in Amman and Istanbul.

**Cynthia Read Gardner's** poems have been published in *Alaska Quarterly Review*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *The Bridge*, and various anthologies such as *Crossing Paths: An Anthology of Poems by Women*, (Mad River Press, 2002). A chapbook, *How Will They Find Me*, was published by Finishing Line Press in 2012. She has been employed as a clinical social worker for many years. She and her husband live in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and have two grown sons.

**David Giannini's** most recently published collections of poetry include *SPAN OF THREAD* (Cervena Barva Press) and *AZ TWO* (Adastra Press,) a "Featured Book" in the 2009 Massachusetts Poetry Festival; *RIM/WAVE* in 2012; plus and 10 chapbooks in 2013-15 including *INVERSE MIRROR*, a collaboration with artist, Judith Koppel. His work appears in national and international literary magazines and anthologies. He was nominated for a Pushcart Prize in 2015. Awards include: Massachusetts Artists Fellowship Awards; The Osa and Lee Mays Award For Poetry; an award for prosepoetry from the University of Florida; and a 2009 Finalist Award from the Naugatuck Review. He has been a gravedigger; beekeeper; taught at Williams College, The University of Massachusetts, and Berkshire Community College, as well as preschoolers and high school students, among others. Giannini was the Lead Rehabilitation Counselor for Compass Center, which he co-founded as the first rehabilitation clubhouse for severely and chronically mentally ill adults in the northwest corner of Connecticut.

**Gerol Petruzella** holds a Ph.D. in philosophy, an M.A. in classical languages, and runs the Center for Academic Technology at MCLA. He has also taught at MCLA since 2007, on topics including logic, ancient Greek language, web development, contemporary moral issues, and more. His 2013 book *Durable*

Goods explores topics in ancient eudaimonism. His current professional interests include game-based learning and instructional design. He is interested, broadly, in exploring how the affordances of digital environments define the practice of traditional liberal arts values, and vice versa.

**Wayne Salazar** is an artist and writer whose photographs, films, and paintings have been exhibited internationally. His film, *Destroying Angel*, and book, *Open Closets*, are in the collections of major museums and university libraries. He is a contributing critic for Artforum.com and his writing on environmental issues appears on Earthjustice.org and AIDA-americas.org. He studied creative writing at Cornell University, earned a BFA from the School of Visual Arts, and earned an MFA from Hunter College.

**Megan Snyder-Camp** grew up in Baltimore and earned a BA at Oberlin College and an MFA at the University of Washington. She is the author of three poetry collections: *The Forest of Sure Things* (Tupelo Press, 2010, winner of the CRAZYHORSE First Book Award); *Wintering* (Tupelo Press, forthcoming on Sept 1st 2016); and *The Gunnywolf* (Bear Star Press, forthcoming on Sept 1st 2016, winner of the Dorothy Brunsman Poetry Prize). She has been awarded grants and fellowships from the Bread Loaf Writers Conference, Djerassi, the 4Culture Foundation, Willapa Bay AiR, the Richard Hugo House, and the HJ Andrews Experimental Forest. Her poems have appeared in *Eco-tone*, *The Southern Review*, *The Sewanee Review*, *FIELD*, *Witness*, the *Cincinnati Review*, *ZYZZYVA* and elsewhere. She lives in Seattle with her husband and three kids.

**Irene Willis** is the author of four collections of poetry, the most recent of which is *Reminder* (Word Poetry, 2014). Her poems, which have been nominated three times for Pushcart Prizes, have also appeared in many magazines

and anthologies. Awards for her poetry include the Violet Reed Haas Poetry Prize from Snake Nation Press, grants and awards from the NJ State Council on the Arts, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the Berkshire/Taconic Foundation, and a residency fellowship from the Millay Colony for the Arts. The holder of an M.A. and Ph.D. from New York University and MFA in Poetry from New England College, she has taught at a number of schools and colleges, including two summers at MCLA's Leadership Academy. Currently she is Poetry Editor of the online publication *International Psychoanalysis*.

**Holly Wren Spaulding** studied creative writing at University of Michigan and Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland, and has received fellowships and residencies from The Millay Colony of the Arts, Blue Mountain Center, The Mesa Refuge, The Jean Noble Parsons Center for the Study of Art and Science, and Panta Rhea Foundation. She's on the creative writing faculty of Interlochen College of Creative Arts, and the founder of Poetry Forge, based in western Massachusetts. Her poems, articles, and reviews have appeared in *The Nation*, *Michigan Quarterly Review*, *Witness*, *The Ecologist*, and in the book *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* (Verso, 2003). Her first collection, *The Grass Impossibly*, won a Michigan Writers Cooperative Press Chapbook Award. Alice Greene & Co. published 'Pilgrim' in 2014.

### Writer's Guidelines

*Submissions should adhere to the following:*

1. Submit unpublished manuscripts via email in MS-Word format. List your name, address, phone number and e-mail address, if available, on the cover sheet, with your name at the top of each page.
2. We will consider simultaneous submissions under the provision that the author notify us of this and contact us immediately if the material is accepted elsewhere.
3. Use MLA style, with in-text references, as appropriate to the content and disciplinary approach of your article (see MLA Style Manual for guidelines).
4. Please include a word count.
5. While we will consider articles of unspecified length, preference is given to articles fewer than 20 pages long.
6. We reserve the right to edit for clarity and accuracy.
7. We will consider artwork (e.g., photographs, line drawings, woodcuts).
8. Payment will be made in contributor's copies.

<p>Submit your manuscript to:</p>	<p>The Mind's Eye Melanie Mowinski, <i>Managing Editor</i> Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts 375 Church St., North Adams, MA 01247 For queries: <a href="mailto:Melanie.Mowinski@mcla.edu">Melanie.Mowinski@mcla.edu</a></p>
-----------------------------------	--